KOINONIA

WE LIVE in an uneasy tension with sin, as Christians in the late twentieth century. We are plagued by a nasty sense of guilt for the problems of the world on the one hand, and by the sense that if we are this far out of control it can't be all our fault, on the other. This is not a new problem in Christian theology; debates over what sin is and what we do about it are written in the earliest records we have.

This issue of *Koinonia* is the latest attempt to grapple with the problem in a forum. Douglas Thorpe raises the issue by proposing a feminist renaming of sin as shame. Shame more adequately describes the psychodynamics of broken relationships, allows for a reconciliation that is not predicated on blame, and points toward a vision of community and healing that is a necessary corrective in the Christian tradition, according to Thorpe.

Nancy Bowen and Mark Harding, from very different points of view, raise the question of how biblical authority would function in this reconstruction of sin. Bowen demonstrates that the language for sin and shame are different in the Old Testament, with different consequences. Indeed, there are times when Yahweh acts to shame an individual or a nation, as well as to restore honor. Harding argues that the biblical notion is more complex than Thorpe's analysis suggests, and that any Christian theology should be guided by the normative evaluations of sin in the Bible.

Thelma Megill-Cobbler points to a flaw that arises from Thorpe's failure to take race and racism into account in his analysis of sin and shame. She also questions whether Thorpe has distinguished adequately the objective and subjective character of sin. What sort of Savior is envisioned if sin is not construed as alienation from God?

Gregory Love and Allan Lane both return us to the problem of agency. Love asks if there can be sin without a sinner, if the role of the will and of the choice involved in damage is not essential to an understanding of sin. Lane suggests that the best of the tradition includes both damage and agency in its description of sin, but that healing comes when we acknowledge ourselves as destructive as well as damaged and accept responsibility before God.

Kathleen Billman points to the bipolarity of shame, that it is not completely negative, because it is a signal that boundaries have been trespassed. Shame is predicated on relationship, that there is a desire for honor in the other's eyes. Billman joins Megill-Cobbler in asking whether a purely individualistic understanding of sin can ever be adequate, then suggests that another possibility for revisioning sin is to reclaim *hamartia*, the falling short of the mark or failing to achieve our potential.

The forum itself was well attended and gracious in its offerings. We are grateful to all of the contributors as well as to those who asked questions and listened carefully. The complexity of the issue has not been resolved, but a number of fresh perspectives are presented here. The conversation continues!

— KIMBERLY PARSONS CHASTAIN

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CONTENTS

Brokenhearted: Sin, Shame, and the Damaged Self

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I. INTRODUCTION

As Christian theology begins to take seriously the experience of women, traditional theological concepts need to be challenged and reinterpreted. Nowhere is this need greater than in Christian theologies of sin. The dominant images of sin in the theological tradition of the West have been drawn nearly exclusively from the experience of men. Therefore they do not speak convincingly or redemptively to the particular experiences of women.

In this essay I offer a reformulated Christian understanding of sin in light of a broad view of human experience that includes women's experience as well as men's. Drawing on the proposal of Rita Nakashima Brock in her book *Journeys by Heart*, I argue that sin should be understood as damage to the self, brokenness inherent in our relationality. When this understanding of sin is combined with a description of the psychodynamics of shame we have a picture of sin and its effects which can speak to the experiences of both women and men.

Before moving into the body of this article, let me say something about my own perspective on this issue. Like many of those whose positions I criticize, I am a white, male, western Protestant. I cannot speak at first hand about women's experience (or indeed about the experience of any who do not share my particular background). Therefore I will be drawing on the work of several women for the descriptions of women's experience which they and I use to critique traditional discussions of sin. While that is a dis-

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advantage to this paper, it is somewhat offset by the fact that I can compare the descriptions of women's experience with my own experience in an effort to formulate a more inclusive conception of sin and shame. In other words, I hope what I say—drawn from my limited perspective and the limited perspectives of others—will illuminate the lives and thought of a wider audience including both women and men.

II. TRADITIONAL IMAGES OF SIN

During the long course of the development of Christian doctrine no one view of sin has been universally accepted. This is certainly true today. My purpose here is not to trace the history of the doctrine of sin, but to examine the way in which men's experience has dominated images of sin, while women's experience has largely been ignored.

The writers of the Bible use many different images for sin (DeVries 1962; this article informs the following three paragraphs). Some of these are moralistic, picturing sin as deviation from norms or law-breaking. A few are monistic in character, construing sin as inextricably linked with the limitations of human creatureliness or physicality. What is most striking about the Bible's wealth of imagery, however, is the predominance of images of personal alienation from God as the essence of sin. Revolt against God, whether by individuals or nations, lies at the heart of sin. Rebellion with its attendant estrangement from God is the key. The prophets often express their understanding of sin in words like these:

> For our transgressions are multiplied before thee,
>> and our sins testify against us;
> for our transgressions are with us,
>> and we know our iniquities:
> transgressing, and denying Yahweh,
>> and turning away from following our God.
> <div align="right">(Is 59:12-13a)</div>

This personalistic conception of sin not only dominates the prophetic tradition, it also figures prominently in the awareness, throughout the law, that sin is first of all a break in relationship with God, and only secondarily a breach of the law.

In the gospels, Jesus is portrayed as holding a much more profound view of sin than the moralism of the Pharisees. While Jesus certainly did not dismiss the law or the outward actions required to keep it, he looked much more to attitude and motivation. The inner life allies a person with, or alienates a person from, God more surely than visible action. Again, this is a personalistic conception of sin.

In the epistles the struggle of the early church with the question of observing the Jewish law is clearly reflected. Some of the writings (James, Hebrews) continue to uphold the law as a standard and its violation as the heart of sin. Paul, however, completely transcends this moralistic viewpoint. Paul often speaks of sin as an evil power, a cruel enemy of the soul which allies itself with the flesh to work against Christ and against God's spirit, bringing condemnation and death.

From these sources, theologies of sin developed in several different directions. It would take us too far from the focus of this paper to follow the various strands in this complex history. There are, however, several major images of sin which recur throughout the tradition. It is worth noting these common features, for they represent the dominant strands of the Christian theological tradition on sin.

Donald Smith (1963) traced major contributions to theologies of sin from the Gospels through the 1950's, including the images of sin used by Jesus, Paul, Irenaeus, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Paul Tillich. Despite the great variety of approaches taken by these people, Smith was able to identify some common strands running through nearly all of their conceptions of sin.

> Sin is the universal and inevitable non-recognition, denial, or defiance by man of the life-giving dependent

relationship of man upon God. This non-recognition, denial, or defiance is predicated in the conditions of existence and brings about a disruption of the man-God relationship. In this disruption man disobeys God and is unable to become what God intended him to be. Unbelief is the core element of the disruption and it eventuates in rebellion, pride, and concupiscence.[1]

Unbelief, rebellion, pride, and concupiscence (centering one's life on aspects of the created world rather than on the creator)—these are the main forms of sin.

A similar phenomenology of sin may be found in the chapter on sin and evil by Robert R. Williams in a popular introductory text in systematic theology. Williams describes the constitutive features of sin as follows:

> First, sin is a turning away from the transcendent, a refusal of finitude and dependence on the transcendent. Hence sin begins with unbelief. Second, to refuse one's proper dependence and subordination to the transcendent is to desire oneself inordinately. Refusal of the transcendent absolute is one side of the self's attempt to render itself absolute. Hence there arises an inordinate self-centeredness and self-seeking, or pride. Third, unbelief and pride alter the self's mode of being in the world from a life lived in communion with and dependence on the transcendent to an inordinate desire of finite goods. The latter are drawn into the self's inordinate self-seeking, and so avarice and idolatry arise as additional essential features of sin. Unbelief, pride, avarice, and idolatry are not only particular sins, they are also essential features present in all sin. (Williams 1985:215)

[1] Smith 1963:84. In direct quotations I have chosen not to change the text for greater inclusivity. Although this might have served to remove the offensiveness of exclusive language, it could also mask the underlying conceptual exclusivity which is now signaled by the language.

Like Smith, Williams sees sin as beginning in unbelief, a breaking of the fundamental relationship with God. Unbelief then leads to pride, under which category Williams would probably include acts of rebellion. Finally, in Williams' arrangement, come the two categories of avarice and idolatry. As manifestations of "an inordinate desire of finite goods," these parallel Smith's understanding of concupiscence.

At the heart of these pictures of sin lies a view of a self asserting its independence from God, believing too much in its own power, and rejecting its limitations. As Valerie Saiving put it, in these views, "sin is the unjustified concern of the self for its own power and prestige" (1979:26). This picture is far from false—acts of self-assertive unbelief and pride are all too common in our world. It is, however, an inadequate and misleading picture because it is fundamentally a description of a masculine self. As Saiving and feminist scholars after her have insisted, women's experience has not generally been that of rebellious, self-assertive individuals. In contrast to men, women have been more prone to self-denial and self-abnegation as socialized reactions to a patriarchal society that denies and rejects attempts at assertion by women. This distinction is made throughout the literature of feminist theology. Summarizing theological criticism from a "feminine" perspective (her quotation marks) since 1960, the date of Saiving's landmark essay, Judith Plaskow writes:

> "Women's sin," it is implied again and again, is not self-centeredness but what have historically been considered the Christian virtues. Self-sacrifice, obedience, etc., while perhaps necessary counterweights to the behavioral excesses of a stereotypically male culture, have been preached to and taken to heart by women, for whom they are already a way of life. Practiced in excess, they undermine the self's relationship to itself and ultimately to God. (Plaskow 1980:2)

From the preceding discussion it may seem that the dominant understandings of sin have been hard on men and easy on women,

condemning the former for their aggression and praising the latter for their dependence and submission. In practice, however, these views of sin do not function that way. Men are promised forgiveness for their self-centeredness, while women are told that their oppression and victimization should be accepted passively. Women are told that acquiescence in abuse is virtuous, that struggles for justice are sinful, that anger at violence is wrong. This only reinforces the status quo of sexist oppression. As Mary Potter Engel (1990) demonstrates, traditional definitions of sin have created particularly serious obstacles to the struggle of abused women. Viewing sin as disobedience, for instance, tells women that disobedience to their abusive husbands is improper. Viewing sin as pride or self-love multiplies the self-blame and self-hatred often felt by victims of violence.

In a similar vein, Plaskow points out that while "self-sacrifice may be relevant to a self whose primary impulse is toward self-assertion . . . the norm of sacrificial love is irrelevant or even destructive for one suffering from the 'sin' of self-lack" (1980:86f). The point is that people with weak or fragmented selves, the condition of many women in a sexist society which denies women full opportunity for self-development, need to be encouraged to self-love and healthy self-assertion. Holding up self-sacrifice as virtuous and decrying self-assertion as sinful only perpetuates oppression.

> The language of self-sacrifice conflicts with personhood and becomes destructive when it suggests that the struggle to become a centered self, to achieve full independent selfhood, is sinful. In this case, theology is not irrelevant to women's situation but rather serves to reinforce women's servitude. It becomes another voice in the chorus of external expectation defining and confining the way women ought to live. (Plaskow 1980:87)

Furthermore, the origin and transmission of sin have often been blamed on women. As Brock puts it:

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Sinfulness is aligned with blame, punishment, and guilt, and blame has usually been assigned to woman as the originator of sin, or to our maternal, organic birth which must be transcended by a higher, spiritual birth. While such assignation of blame may absolve individual believers of guilt, it carries undertones of both misogyny and self-hate for it puts persons in inner conflict with themselves. (Brock 1988:6)

The conceptions of sin as self-assertion and denial of dependence which have dominated Christian theologies, then, reflect a masculine bias. Based as they are on a limited and distorted view of human experience, they perpetuate the oppression of women. Furthermore, from their limited base they cannot speak accurately to the experience of women, and only address part of the experience of men. Saiving concludes:

Contemporary theological doctrines of love [and sin] have, I believe, been constructed primarily upon the basis of masculine experience and thus view the human condition from the male standpoint. Consequently, these doctrines do not provide an adequate interpretation of the situation of women—nor, for that matter, of men . . . (Saiving 1979:27)

A new way of envisioning sin is needed. One conception of sin which offers a way to address the experience of both women and men is Paul Tillich's idea of estrangement or self-alienation. "Modern man," Tillich wrote, "has a profound feeling of estrangement as self-alienation from his genuine and true being, of enmity within himself and within his world, of separation from the ultimate source of being and meaning" (1984:1).

This triple estrangement—from one's true self, from others, and, most fundamentally, from God, the infinite ground of being—lies much deeper than any disobedience of law. It seems, moreover, to provide a way to talk about both self-assertion and

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self-abnegation. Self-assertion and denial of dependence reflects estrangement from the ground of being. Tillich treats sin of this sort under the traditional categories of unbelief (or "un-faith," as he would prefer) and *hubris*, although he reinterprets each of these categories in its context within his system (1957:47-51). Self-abnegation more directly reflects estrangement from oneself, although that too is rooted in estrangement from the ground of being. Tillich even has a special name for the failure to make self-constituting decisions. He terms this form of estrangement "uncreative weakness," and at one point calls it sin in its "normal" form (1936:93f).

Tillich's theology does provide a helpful framework for addressing the particular temptations of women as well as the actions more traditionally identified by Christian theology as sin. Certain characteristics of his theology, however, make it less well suited to dealing with women's experience than at first appears.

We have already noted that Tillich uses the traditional language of unbelief and hubris, as well as concupiscence, to speak of sin as estrangement. These terms are drawn from the tradition that focuses on active, assertive aspects of sinfulness. Furthermore, as Plaskow points out, even when his choice of traditional vocabulary does not constrain him, Tillich often chooses to focus on these aspects of sin rather than on sins of weakness. If this choice is not forced by his vocabulary, both the choice of focus and his choice of vocabulary must be based in part on the substance of his thought. Plaskow traces these choices to the link Tillich makes between self-actualization and the fall.

> In particular, the theological root of his concern for creative forms of sin would seem to lie in his ontology and more especially in his view of the coincidence of creation and the fall. Since the moment of human self-actualization is also the beginning of the fall, active self-constitution is always simultaneously the realization of estrangement. The failure to act, on the other hand, has no clear ontological claim to be considered sin. (Plaskow 1980:117)

In his concern for reconciliation with the divine ground and his equation of the moment of self-actualization with the fall, Tillich provides no clear way to maintain that uncreative weakness is sinful rather than a movement back toward reunion with the ground of being. Thus the categories in his theology which helpfully explain and judge women's experience exist in considerable tension with the larger framework in which they are located. We still need a theological framework which can address sins of uncreative weakness on an equal footing with active, assertive sin.

III. SIN AND SHAME: A REFORMULATION

Rita Nakashima Brock has proposed a new way of understanding sin which seeks to avoid the pitfall of neglecting sins of self-denial and self-abnegation. Brock advocates defining sin as damage inherent in our nature as relational beings.

> I believe understanding sin as damage enhances responsibility and healing instead of miring us in blame and guilt. I am suggesting that sinfulness is neither a state that comes inevitably with birth nor something that permeates all human existence, but a symptom of the unavoidably relational nature of human existence through which we come to be damaged and damage others. Our attempts to avoid that radically relational nature—a thoroughly contingent existence which embeds us in history and society—emerge from our inability to face our own pain and be healed. If we begin with an understanding that we are intimately connected, constituted by our relationships ontologically, that is, as a basic unavoidable principle of existence, we can understand our brokenness as a consequence of our relational existence. . . .
>
> Sin emerges because our relationships have the capacity to destroy us and we participate in destruction when we seek to destroy ourselves or others. Hence sin is a sign of our brokenheartedness, of how damaged we are,

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not of how evil, willfully disobedient, and culpable we are. Sin is not something to be punished, but something to be healed. (Brock 1988:7)

In Brock's view of sin as damage, the focus is no longer on a solitary, independent self acting in aggressive assertion. This masculine myth of the separate individual has been replaced with an understanding of the self as "relationship-seeking activity" (Brock 1988:9). Brock sees people as fundamentally relational, connected intimately to each other. Sin is actions or attitudes that arise from our damaged selves, causing and perpetuating damage, breaking relationships, severing us from connection with one another, and leaving us alone.

This understanding of sin as damage does not eliminate individual responsibility for sinful action. On the contrary, it strengthens responsibility because it stresses the effects each person's actions have on her/his relationships with others. The prideful, assertive man is revealed as a perpetrator of violence against those with whom his relationship is one of dominance/submission, particularly women. He is held responsible for the destruction of others through these relationships. The self-denying woman, on the other hand, is also held responsible for her contribution to the damage in her relationships of dependency. Responsibility is not maintained in the context of blame and guilt, though, but in the context of brokenness and damage and the power of our interrelatedness both to convey and to heal that damage. Brock's term for the restorative power of relationality is "original grace," the power of healing and self-acceptance (1988:8). It is every person's responsibility to seek this healing.

When we conceive of sin in terms of damage rather than in the traditional terms of unbelief, pride, rebellion, and concupiscence, the connection between sin and guilt is greatly weakened. Damage in our relationality does not cause the pain of guilt, but rather the deeper pain we call shame. While shame and guilt are closely related and have often been treated by theologians under the broad category of guilt, they are different in ways which are important for a new theology of sin.

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To help understand this claim that the damage of sin leads to shame rather than guilt, we can turn to a psychological description of the development and psychodynamics of shame in the human person. The classic study of shame is that of Helen Merrell Lynd, who offers this definition of the subject:

> Shame is defined as a wound to one's self-esteem, a painful feeling or sense of degradation excited by the consciousness of having done something unworthy of one's previous idea of one's own excellence. It is, also, a peculiarly painful feeling of being in a situation that incurs the scorn or contempt of others. The awareness of self is central in both conceptions, but in the second the feeling or action of others is also a part of shame. There is no legal reference as in guilt, no question of a failure to pay a debt, and less implication of the violation of a prescribed code. (Lynd 1958:23f)

Although related to guilt, shame is quite different. In shame, the standards which are violated are generally one's own image of who one actually is. In guilt it is an image of who one should be that is violated. In psychological terms, shame violates the ego-ideal, guilt the superego. Furthermore, shame arises out of a failure to reach a goal, guilt from crossing a boundary (Piers and Singer 1953:11). The distinction here is between shortcoming and transgression. (We might compare this to the distinction between two words the New Testament writers use for sin. *Parabasis* has the sense of overstepping or transgressing. The much more common *hamartia*, which in classical usage meant the missing of a target or road, carries the sense of falling short or missing the mark; see DeVries 1962.) Shame and guilt also bring with them different kinds of anxiety. Shame arouses a fear of abandonment, guilt a fear of punishment. And in shame, unlike in guilt, the *"lex talionis,"* the rule of punishment identical to the offense, does not obtain (Piers and Singer 1953:11).

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In the course of human development, the groundwork for shame is laid very early, before that of guilt. Erik Erikson places the crisis of Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt, the second of his eight stages of human development, immediately before the crisis of Initiative vs. Guilt (1963:251-254). Thus shame arises before guilt and before the childhood struggles Freud termed the Oedipal conflict.

We have already seen that Lynd stresses the connection between feelings of shame and awareness of the self. The concept of "self" is one not easily integrated into classical Freudian conceptions of id, ego, and superego. Thus psychologists who have pursued Lynd's suggestion that the roots of shame are found in the development of the self have moved, to a certain degree, away from classical psychoanalytic theory.

One psychologist with an interest in the relation between the self and shame is Andrew P. Morrison. Morrison describes the link between shame and the self as follows: "The referent of shame . . . is the self, which is experienced as defective, inadequate, and having failed in its quest to attain a goal. These goals of the self relate to ideals internalized through identification with the 'good' (or idealized) parent" (Morrison 1986:351).

Morrison elaborates considerably on this connection of the self and shame. Drawing on Heinz Kohut's definition of the self as "a center of productive initiative," he uses "self" to mean "the center of the subjective, experience-near attributes of individual identity" (Morrison 1986:357). The developing self, still following Kohut, has two chances to establish itself in a healthy, cohesive manner. The first chance comes from adequate and empathic mirroring of the child's grandiose exhibitionism. Children begin to develop a sense of themselves as their exhibitionistic impulses are positively reflected back to them in the responses of a parent. Mirroring, however, is imperfect. No parent or set of parents has the time, emotional security, maturity, and boundless empathy to perfectly mirror exhibitionism. This failure of responsiveness on the part of the parents leaves the child feeling abandoned or rejected. Thus

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the child develops a self with structural deficiencies (Morrison 1986:358-360).

The second chance comes later (ages 3-6) as the child develops a cohesive idealized parent-imago through the empathic response of a parent who permits the child's idealization of and merger with her/him. At this stage children build onto their self structure by merger/identification with a mature, empathic, adult whom they idealize. From this merger/identification they build ideals, ambitions, and goals. The pursuit of these ideals can give the self-esteem lacking due to structural defects in the self (Morrison 1986:358-360).

Shame is related to the tension between the ideal self formulated in this "second chance" and the structures of the nuclear self formed in the "first chance." When a person fails to live up to the ideal self, the sense of self-defect and shortcoming brings back the fear of abandonment or rejection first felt in failed mirroring. This is the anxiety of shame.

Since shame is connected to the development of the self, its roots are put down very early in life, before the formation of gender identity (see Chodorow 1978). Thus the development of shame dynamics is roughly the same for both sexes. When women and men say they feel shame they are describing roughly the same emotion. This does not mean, however, that experiences of shame later in life are the same for both sexes. One of the damaging aspects of patriarchal culture is its widespread shaming of women. Thus in North American culture women are likely to feel shame much more often than men.

When Morrison's description of the development of shame is set alongside Brock's description of the development of the damaged self, striking resemblance emerges. Drawing on the object-relations analysis of Alice Miller (1981, 1984a, 1984b), Brock focuses on the narcissistic stage of infant development, the same time period Morrison examines. Brock adopts Miller's definition of the self as a set of capacities involving "the ability to feel one's own physical, emotional, and sensory needs, to make those needs known, and to receive through the body, senses, and feelings, the

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world outside the self" (Brock 1988:9). This meshes well with Morrison's description of "subjective, experience-near attributes of individual identity."

Damage arises when a child's nurturers cannot adequately meet his or her needs—when they cannot accept, approve, and reflect (mirror, in Morrison's terms) the child's feelings. When adults exploit the dependency of children for their own needs, the children are damaged. When the primary nurturer fears or dislikes certain emotions—among which Brock lists sexuality, sensuality, anger and jealousy as the most probable—the infant unconsciously picks up this message of dislike and repression and represses these same emotions. Part of the infant's feeling self is lost. The self is wounded, damaged—in Morrison's terms, structurally deficient. Thus the damage which Brock sees as the root of sin is also the structural deficiency that gives rise to shame. Shame, in other words, is the emotion that comes from damage to the self, from sin. The self, constituted through its relationships, damaged by those relationships, and crippled in its ability to relate, experiences shame as the result of this damage.

A word of caution is in order here. In our culture primary nurturers are generally mothers. We must be very careful not to use the preceding etiology of shame and damage to blame mothers. Their inability to provide adequately empathic mirroring stems from their own damage, which is exacerbated by a patriarchal culture. In addition, the relative lack of involvement of most fathers in child-rearing removes one of the child's two potential sources of mirroring. The point here is not to affix blame for damage to the self, but to point out the close connection between the roots of damage and the roots of shame.

If shame has its origin in the defective development of the self, how is shame experienced? What brings on the painful anxiety first experienced as fear of abandonment in childhood? What does this pain do to us when we feel it?

Lynd presents several aspects of shame. To begin with, shame is characterized by exposure, particularly unexpected exposure. Experiences of shame bring exposure of "peculiarly sensitive, inti-

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mate, vulnerable aspects of the self" (Lynd 1958:27). This may be exposure to others, but it is always to oneself, and this exposure of one's own weakness to oneself is what makes exposure of weakness to others painful. When we are shamed we often wish we could hide or be swallowed up by a hole in the floor. We seek to cover our exposure.

More than other emotions, shame involves a quality of the unexpected; if in any way we feel it coming we are powerless to avert it. This is in part because of the difficulty we have in admitting to ourselves either shame or the circumstances that give rise to shame. Whatever part voluntary action may have in the experience of shame is swallowed up in the sense of something that overwhelms us from without and "takes us" unawares.

> The feeling of unexpectedness marks one of the central contrasts between shame and guilt. This unexpectedness is more than suddenness in time; it is also an astonishment at seeing different parts of ourselves, conscious and unconscious, acknowledged and unacknowledged, suddenly coming together, and coming together with aspects of the world we have not recognized. (Lynd 1958:34)

Shame is also marked by incongruity or inappropriateness. Some experiences of being taken unawares may be neutral or even delightful. They become painful when they expose something incongruous with or inappropriate to the situation or to the image we held of our own position in the situation. "We have acted on the assumption of being one kind of person living in one kind of surroundings, and unexpectedly, violently, we discover that these assumptions are false" (Lynd 1958:34). This, for instance, is the experience of someone who arrives at a party in blue jeans, expecting to find the other guests similarly informal, and instead discovers that everyone else is in formal evening wear.

Such experiences of sudden inappropriateness or incongruity are often brought on by very minor incidents. When this happens,

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we may feel a double shame; shame at the original episode and shame at having such deep feeling over so slight an event.

Related to the discovery of having held false assumptions is the threat to trust in an experience of shame. Shame may question one's own adequacy or the values which led one to expect something different or both. It may jeopardize our trust in others.

> We have relied on the picture of the world they have given us and it has proved mistaken; we have turned for response in what we thought was a relation of mutuality and have found our expectation misinterpreted or distorted; we have opened ourselves in anticipation of a response that was not forthcoming. (Lynd 1958:47)

Shame involves the whole self. Acts which bring shame are marked by self-consciousness, a feeling that the self stands revealed. Thus shame both comes from without and is brought on voluntarily. It does not come through choosing to engage in a specific "sinful" act. But one's choices and commitments put one in a position to feel anxiety about one's own adequacy. "One finds oneself in a situation in which hopes and purposes are invested and in which anxiety about one's own adequacy may also be felt. In shame the inadequacy becomes manifest; the anxiety is realized" (Lynd 1958:50).

Since shame involves the whole self, it cannot be easily removed. An action which brings guilt can be separated from the self. We can say, "I did that, but that action does not reflect the real me." Thus guilt can be mitigated, nullified, expiated. Shame cannot. "It is not an isolated act that can be detached from the self. . . . It is pervasive as anxiety is pervasive; its focus is not a separate act, but revelation of the whole self. The thing that has been exposed is what I am" (Lynd 1958:50).

Shame confronts us with tragedy. Because actions which bring shame cannot be separated from the self they raise serious questions of meaning. We cannot easily explain what brought on our

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shame. We don't know how we got into such a situation. We see no way to remove our shame.

> Acknowledgment of personal sin or confession of guilt may sometimes be a defense against the possibility that there may be no meaning in the world. After some experiences of shame and fear of emptiness we may welcome guilt as a friend. Sin, guilt, punishment—each is, in one sense, an affirmation of order and significance. Shame questions the reality of any significance. Guilt in oneself is easier to face than lack of meaning in life. (Lynd 1958:58)

This characteristic of shame, its raising of questions of meaning, provides a clue to the dominance of guilt issues over shame issues in popular and scholarly discussions. Looking at situations in terms of guilt rather than shame allows us to find meaning in them. We can assign blame, set appropriate punishment, and feel we have restored order to our world. With shame this is not possible. Thus experiences of shame are often linked with or subsumed under guilt. Guilt is used as a cover story for shame in many parts of our culture, including psychology and theology (Lynd 1958:58; Erikson 1968:110).

Finally, shame can be extremely difficult to communicate. Since it doesn't fit any pattern, since, in fact, it breaks expected patterns, a shame experience is extremely disturbing and very difficult to communicate. Shame separates us from other people. It leaves us isolated, struggling on our own to restore our injured self.

Just as Morrison's account of the developmental roots of shame corresponds well with Brock's understanding of the source of our damaged selves, so Lynd's description of shame experiences correlates well with Brock's depiction of the effects of the damage of sin.

Shame connects strongly with the relational emphasis in Brock's view of sin. The incongruity and loss of trust which characterize much shame arise out of false pictures of the world, including false

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expectations derived from relationships with other people. Lynd described the situation in which people expect a response in a relation of mutuality but find this expectation to have been wrong. This pain through relationality is a major aspect of Brock's understanding of sin.

In a similar vein, damage isolates those who experience it, and isolation is a key aspect of shame. Damage makes a person vulnerable to the scorn and contempt sometimes felt in shame. It cuts off communication and sets people apart. These are relational injuries in which damage brings shame.

Furthermore, if shame often comes on us unexpectedly, when we have no chance to avoid it, this also fits with Brock's understanding of sin as damage. Damage to our selves is not a matter for blame—we could not avoid it. Often we cannot anticipate how it will cause us to act, so we shame ourselves unexpectedly. However, since shame involves the whole self, its unexpectedness does not eliminate all personal responsibility. Shame both comes from without and is brought on by voluntary acts. All our relationships are damaged to some degree and we play a part in each relationship. At times we put ourselves in a position to feel shame. At all times we are responsible to face our damaged selves and seek our own healing. Seeking someone to blame will not move us any closer to healing. Shame, as an expression of damage, cannot be expiated or atoned for. It must be healed.

When we understand sin as damage inherent in the unavoidably relational nature of human life, then, a connection emerges between sin and shame rather than sin and guilt. Furthermore, if Brock is correct, this understanding of sin and shame better corresponds to the experience of both women and men than traditional views of self-assertion and guilt.

IV. ABUSE, SIN, AND SHAME

To test this revised view of sin as damage to the self whose expression brings shame, let us return to Mary Potter Engel's attempt to reconceive sin in light of the experience of abused women. Engel

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is trying to walk a fine line between blaming the victims of abuse, on one extreme, and viewing them as essentially passive and without responsibility (and therefore without the ability to change the situation), on the other. Her solution is to stress sin, individual responsibility, and accountability when speaking of perpetrators, and evil when speaking of victims, while remembering that women have some responsibility for their lives and men are tempted by evil structures. She then reinterprets sin in ways that denounce abuse while supporting the coping strategies of victims. Instead of viewing sin as anger and resistance, she proposes seeing sin as "distortion of feeling or lack of moral sensitivity." In place of disobedience, she suggests "distortion of the relationship of trust or betrayal of loyalty." For pride and self-love she substitutes "distortion of boundaries/limits or lack of care." And concupiscence she reinterprets in terms of "distortion of the dependence/freedom dynamic or lack of consent to our vulnerabilities" (Engel 1990:156-164).

Engel's reformulations of sin serve excellently to denounce abuse and support the coping strategies of victims. They remain set, however, in a sin/guilt framework. This leaves Engel still trying to assign blame and guilt in every situation. When she reinterprets sin as distortion of boundaries rather than pride, for example, she is left facing questions of blame. How much guilt do abusers have for transgressing the boundary of others? How much guilt do victims have for not individuating enough, for not asserting themselves enough, for fleeing their responsibilities?

Engel's descriptions of the experience of both abusers and abused can be better understood in terms of sin as damage in our relationally constituted selves which leads to shame. She opens her essay by quoting a poem written by a woman who has been raped. The poet cries out, "I am not wrong . . . and I can't tell you who the hell set things up like this" (Jordan 1980:86-89). This is the cry of a shamed person searching for meaning in an event in which meaning is very hard to find.

The experiences of abused women display all the aspects of shame. Abuse makes one extremely self-conscious. It is usually felt

as something to be hidden, to be covered up, even to be denied. Our whole society participates in this cover-up of abuse. As Engel points up, "In our culture the great taboo is not against incest and other forms of abuse but against talking about these abuses" (1990:157). This desire to cover up forms a central dynamic of shame.

Abuse may also severely damage a person's self-esteem. It exposes "sensitive, intimate, vulnerable aspects of the self," to use Lynd's phrase for this aspect of shame. It also exposes a victim to scorn and contempt, the second key to Lynd's definition. And often it comes unexpectedly, unavoidably.

Abuse can shatter assumptions about the nature of a person's relationships and environment. Thus it destroys trust, another aspect of shame, because it reveals that the picture of the world with which a person has operated is a false one and relationships which were assumed to be mutual or at least supportive were not.

This destruction of trust is often the experience of women who make an attempt at healthy self-assertion in areas of our society dominated by men, for instance business, politics, or the ministry. Just when they feel they are being accepted and judged on the basis of their merit, they encounter a sudden prejudice which restricts their possibility of advancement. A woman who has felt accepted at her workplace may suddenly find herself the target of sexual harassment when she is up for promotion. A woman who has been encouraged to enter the ministry may find she can locate a first placement after seminary but cannot move on from there.

Finally, abuse, as shaming experience, isolates the victim. The difficulty of communicating feelings of shame adds to the pain of abuse. In a more positive light, successful communication of shame can be wonderfully healing.

Viewing abuse as shaming damage to the self in the context of relationship, then, helps us see the victimization of abused women as sin. In addition, it gives us a framework for understanding the ways in which women are drawn into complying with abuse and inhibited in resisting. One of the terrible features of abuse is the way in which victims as well as perpetrators can come to comply

with the victimization. A theology of sin must be able to criticize both sides of this complicity while supporting strategies of resistance to violence. It is precisely here that traditional views of sin have failed, providing no good criticism of the complicity of victims and rendering many forms of resistance theologically suspect.

No woman either asks or deserves to be abused. This basic principle must form the bottom line in any discussion of abuse. As Engel points out, though, adult victims are often "lured into complying with their victimization" (1990:156). This complicity in victimization fits with Lynd's description of shame as both coming upon one from without and being brought on by one's own action. As we have noted, Lynd describes shame arising "in a situation in which hopes and purposes are invested" (1958:49), a description which would fit the relationships in which domestic violence occurs. Women invest "hopes and purposes" in situations and relationships in which they are later abused. This investment of emotional and physical resources, including one's body, in a situation which proves destructive is part of what gives the experience of abuse the particular pain of shame.

The point of this analysis of abuse as an experience which involves one's own action as well as another's is not to apportion blame, but to help abused women see their ability and their responsibility to get out of situations of abuse and to seek healing for abuse that has already happened. They have the power to influence their future. They do not need to comply with or even passively accept abuse. Certainly we must insist that responsibility for any abusive act lies with the abuser. But we can say this without further victimizing victims by denying their power to change their circumstances and seek healing.

Complicity in violence, then, is also sin, an expression of a damaged self. It is an expression of damage greatly reinforced by a patriarchal culture that tells women they deserve abuse, they should serve men, they should sacrifice themselves for others. These are messages which traditional understandings of sin have encouraged. By declaring self-sacrifice, service, obedience, forgiveness and dependence to be virtues, theology has supported the

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victimization of women. Defining anger, resistance, disobedience and self-love as sinful has taken away necessary strategies for survival and liberation from abuse.

When sin is defined as damage to the self, however, the damaging effects of self-denial and self-sacrifice by abused women are revealed as sin. Anger, resistance, disobedience, self-love and independence can be claimed as positive, healing responses to abuse. The damage or healing done to the self in its relationships provides the criteria for evaluation.

The experiences of victims of abuse, then, bring shame to selves damaged in relationships. Complicity in abuse is also an expression of sin because it contributes to damage. Anger, disobedience, self-assertion and other strategies of resistance, though, are proper, necessary, healing responses to abuse.

Turning to the perpetrators of abuse, most often men, how can their actions be understood in the framework of an conception of sin as damage leading to shame? This side of the analysis is less readily apparent. Nevertheless, if the central thesis of this essay is to be supported we must be able to understand the characteristic sins of both women and men in terms of damage and shame.

As a violation of a boundary, violence certainly incurs guilt. Aggressive self-assertion and transgression of norms aptly characterize physical abuse. Therefore an analysis of abusive actions as incurring guilt remains valid.

Behind the self-assertive violations of abuse, however, lies a damaged self, a person unable to relate to others in a healthy way. Abusive men, like all other people, are damaged. The relationships in which their selves developed were damaged, so they grew up unable to relate in a healthy way to others. Most abusive men either witnessed violence between their own parents or were themselves the victims of abuse. One survey of the men in a treatment program for batterers found that 70% came from homes where they and/or a sibling or their mother was abused (Sonkin, Martin, and Auerbach-Walker 1985:46). Male abusers tend to be physically and emotionally isolated, highly dependent on their partners for emotional needs, and lacking in the skills necessary to ask for what

they want in a positive, non-threatening way. They often distrust both women and men, carry anger from the past which they project onto current relationships, lack skill in communication of emotions, and hold stereotypical, unrealistic ideals of male achievement which they cannot attain. They may feel angry, depressed, anxious, extremely stressed and out of control (Sonkin, Martin, and Auerbach-Walker 1985:43-46).

The view of abusers as damaged persons is confirmed by Del Martin's summary of descriptions given by their victims:

> Battering husbands . . . though they may be terrifying
> . . . often have about them an aura of helplessness, fear,
> inadequacy, and insecurity. The battering husband is
> likely to be a "loser" in some basic way. He is probably
> angry with himself and frustrated by his life. He may
> put up a good front in public, but in the privacy and
> intimacy of his home he may not be able to hide, either
> from himself or his wife, his feelings of inadequacy and
> low self-esteem. (Martin 1981:45)

A more telling portrait of a damaged self could hardly be imagined.

At its heart abuse is a tragic failure to live up to an ideal of proper relationship. Abuse exposes the weakness of men, their inability to relate in a healthy manner. Therefore it brings them shame. Abuse stands revealed as horribly inappropriate to the situation. Often it exposes men's image of themselves as grossly incongruous with the situation. Abusive men have been raised to believe they must assert themselves. They trust themselves to a view of the situation which allows or even requires them to dominate. When that image is suddenly exposed as totally inappropriate, they are shamed.

Abuse involves the whole self of the perpetrator. Not just the violent act itself, but the very person of the abusive man stands exposed. In this way abuse fits Lynd's description of an act that brings on shame: "It is not an isolated act that can be detached

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from the self. It carries the weight of 'I cannot have done this. But I have done it and I cannot undo it, because this is I'" (Lynd 1958:50).

An analysis of abuse in terms of damage leading to shame, then, shows the guilt analysis to be superficial. The shame of a damaged self is deeper, more profound, closer to the core of sin. To paraphrase Paul Tillich, it is not the disobedience to a law or the transgression of a boundary that makes an act sinful, but the fact that it is an expression of a relationally damaged self.

When we understand abuse as sin in this way, as the expression of a damaged self, our focus widens from individual, guilt-inducing actions to the broader, more basic damage of the self in its relationships. We still hold the abuser responsible for the destruction of others with whom he is related. We also hold the victim of abuse responsible for exercising her power to escape situations of abuse and seek healing, even as we recognize that the damage of abuse severely limits that power. In addition, we widen the conception of responsibility to include all those in relationship with both abuser and abused—family, friends, church, and even society at large. All of these people have a responsibility to seek proper relationships with both sides. This demands confronting abusers, protecting victims, and structuring healing for both. It requires challenging society's patterns of male dominance that support violence by men. In this way responsibility remains strong without drawing us back into the old language of assertion/guilt as the heart of sin.

The temptation to lose sight of the damage of the abuser and focus only on his guilt is very strong. If we can assign guilt we can find meaning. Furthermore, by assigning guilt to the perpetrator of violence we neatly locate sin in one person. The family and friends and society and theology which fostered the abusive relationship can claim to have played no part in his actions.

It may be that for victims of abuse it is necessary to focus on the guilt of the abuser in order to confront him and effect their own escape and healing. An abuser's pleas for understanding and compassion all too often prey on the conflicts of victims and prolong

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the abuse. Rage and blaming are often necessary to empower victims.

A pastoral theology of sin, however, should look beyond the guilt to the underlying damaged self. Even when it is impossible to sympathize with the brutality of abusers, focusing on guilt only leads to fixing blame and looking backward in time. Seeing the damage erupting in violence shifts attention to healing, looking ahead.

V. CONCLUSION

Traditional views of sin as unbelief, pride, rebellion, or concupiscence which leads to guilt, then, are based too exclusively on the experience of men. They are in many instances irrelevant or even damaging to women because they promote passivity and self-denial. Part of their popularity can be traced to their ability to give meaning to painful experiences by assigning blame, but this gives a falsely simple and individualistic picture of sin and presents an obstacle to healing.

Viewing sin as the damage inherent in our relational nature that leads to shame moves in a direction similar to that of Paul Tillich. Individual actions are sinful as they express that damage. This understanding though, insists on taking into consideration the experience of both women and men. It is based on an anthropology and a psychology which see human beings as fundamentally relational. It traces our pain to a level deeper than the origins of guilt, to flaws in the formation of our very self within our primary relationships. It provides us with a single standard for both women and men.

Having a single conception that encompasses the characteristic sins of both women and men represents a significant advance for theology. If men's and women's sins are understood differently one will inevitably be regarded as the essential form of sin while the other will be seen as derivative or secondary. In a patriarchal culture, women's sin—and therefore women's modes of activity in

the world—will be labelled less significant than men's. If sin is damage to the self it is the same for women and men, even if its most common forms of expression may vary.

Conceptualizing sin as damage to the self leaves us with some unanswered questions of meaning. It also leaves us with no one to blame. What we do have, though, is original grace, the healing power of relationality. Recognizing our responsibility for our healing, not our blame for guilt, we can turn to this source of healing.

This revised view of sin carries profound implications for theology. It suggests the need for a soteriology designed not to atone for our guilt but to heal our damage and comfort us in our shame. This would affect our understanding of Jesus and the entire Christ event. This view of sin also suggests a reinterpretation of parts of the Bible in which guilt issues may have been highlighted as a cover story for deeper shame issues. But these are issues for other times. If we can begin to reconceive sin, that will be a first step.

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Damage and Healing:
Shame and Honor in the Old Testament

NANCY R. BOWEN

Douglas Thorpe (1991) claims that there is a need to redefine sin using the language of shame instead of the language of guilt. He argues that such a redefinition is possible on the basis of the correspondence between Rita Nakashima Brock's understanding of sin as damage and Andrew Morrison's and Helen Merrell Lynd's understanding of the psychology of shame (1991:16-18, 22f). The question the first part of this response will attempt to answer is whether there is also a correspondence with the Old Testament material.

One way to begin is to examine the vocabulary for shame and guilt in the Old Testament.[1] Lyn Bechtel Huber (1983:43-56) has done such a study. She concludes that linguistically there is no connection between them (Huber 1983:55). None of the words which are parallel to, associated with or linked with shame has a connotation of guilt, and there is no instance where guilt is parallel with shame (1983:51). And if guilt in the Old Testament is understood in relation to culpability, to deserving blame for violating a prohibition, then there is also no inherent meaning of guilt in the words for shame (1983:53-55). Therefore, linguistically there is warrant in the Old Testament for looking at shame separately from guilt.

If this is the case, then what is Israel's understanding of shame? It can perhaps be best understood as it stands in contrast with its opposite. In Old Testament language the opposite of shame is

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[1] The primary vocabulary connoting shame are בּוֹשׁ, כָּלַם, קָלָה II, חָפֵר II and חָרַף II. The primary vocabulary connoting guilt are עָוֹן and אָשַׁם.

honor. This interrelatedness has been spelled out by Pedersen (1959:213-244). Pedersen finds that in biblical thought both shame and honor react on a person's self (נֶפֶשׁ). Honor increases or fills the self making it "heavy" (כָּבוֹד) (1959:213). Shame decreases or empties it, making it lowly (1959:235).

Karen Horney has made this connection between shame and honor in the field of psychology (1950). She points out that in growth toward maturity, the individual develops an idealized image of the self which entails a general self-glorification (1950:22). She labels this "healthy pride" (1950:37f, 88). This healthy pride is based on sustaining the ideal self. When healthy pride is violated, what people experience is shame. Shame is the response to the loss of pride, i.e. the idealized image of self (1950:96-97). If there is a correspondence between the world of psychology and the biblical world, then it is not surprising to find that when there is an actual, threatened or perceived loss of that in which Israel takes pride and finds honor (the idealized self), this is described as shameful.

For example, Israel takes pride in being a powerful nation with the strength to defeat its enemies. Thus, their own military defeat at the hand of their enemies was experienced as shameful. This would explain why one of the ways the experience of exile is described is with the language of shame.[2]

> For a sound of wailing is heard from Zion;
>> "How we are ruined!
>> We are utterly shamed,
> because we have left the land,
>> because they have cast down our dwellings."
>>>>>> Jer 9:19
> We are put to shame, for we have heard insults;
>> dishonor has covered our face,
> for aliens have come
>> into the holy places of the Lord's house.
>>>>>> Jer 51:51

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[2] See also Isa 54:4-6 and Ps 89:38-45.

The nation also perceived crop failure and the resulting famine as shameful. This was a disgrace for it meant that God's blessing, in the form of abundance of harvest (Deut 28:3-12), which gives honor, has been withdrawn.[3]

> Judah mourns . . .
> Her nobles send their servants for water;
>   they come to the cisterns,
> they find no water,
>   they return with their vessels empty.
> They are ashamed and dismayed
>   and cover their heads,
> because the ground is cracked.
>   Because there has been no rain on the land
> the farmers are dismayed;
>   they cover their heads.
>   Jer 14:2-4

For the individual, what gives honor is the praise and approval of the community. Thus, loss of that social favor through rejection and abandonment by that community leads to shame. In the book of Job it is made clear that Job has been shamed by the loss of status and prestige that is a consequence of the loss of family and wealth (Job 19:1-22).

This is also a familiar theme in the Psalms. One example is Psalm 22. In this psalm the psalmist wonders at his own situation of shame which is the result of being scorned, mocked, and despised by the community (vv. 6-8). Such behavior is shaming because it does not give honor to the individual and so diminishes the status of the psalmist in the community.

If sin is to be understood as damage, then there is correspondence with the biblical material. What Israel described as shameful, those experiences which diminished the self of the nation or individual, certainly had the capacity to destroy and so can be described as damaging. These experiences also correspond to

[3] See also Jer 12:13 and Joel 1:10-12.

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some of what psychology has identified as shame experiences. Therefore, whether or not it can be argued that sin must be completely redefined, it can be argued that the Old Testament supports including the experience of shame as part of our damage.

As Thorpe notes, "this revised view of sin carries profound implications for theology" (1991:26). Specifically, this revised view implies the need for a new soteriology. Brock suggests a direction for such a soteriology. She says, "sin is not something to be punished, but something to be healed" (Brock 1988:7). Thus, salvation is viewed in categories of healing and not atonement. This leads to the question of whether the Old Testament offers a view of healing for the damage caused by shame. I believe that it does.

This view can be seen clearly in Oracles of Salvation that speak of the end of Israel's exile.[4]

> I will deal with all your oppressors at that time.
> And I will save the lame
>   and gather the outcast,
> and I will change their shame into praise
>   and renown in all the earth.
> At that time I will bring you home,
>   at the time when I gather you;
> . . .
> when I restore your fortunes
>   before your eyes, says the Lord.
>   Zeph 3:19f

> I will repay you for the years
>   that the swarming locust has eaten . . .
> You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied . . .
> And my people shall never again be put to shame.
>   Joel 2:25f

Even these few verses illustrate that the healing of shame is accomplished in the restoration of honor. "Salvation" is making full again the self that has been emptied.

[4] See also Isa 34:14-17; 61:7; Ezek 34:25-29; 39:25-27; Zeph 3:11-13.

The second part of this response will explore possible relationships between the context that Thorpe has set for his work and the biblical material. This context is the experience of abused women and the sometimes overwhelming feelings of shame that result from the abuse (1991:18f). These women experience shame because part of the damage that results from abuse is the loss of pride and the diminishment of the self. In this context the healing of shame through the restoration of honor can have some positive effects. First of all, it supports the coping strategies of these survivors. Healing is whatever is needed to make the self full again, that leads to enhanced self-acceptance, i.e. the restoration of their honor.

Secondly, this perspective provides a critique for theologies which emphasize atonement. Theologies that stress the need for suffering and sacrifice can be irrelevant or destructive for those whose experience is of *not* having honor or healthy pride. From the perspective of the healing of shame through the restoration of honor, healing is accomplished strictly through an act of grace by God toward Israel. Sacrifice is not needed for the restoration of honor in the Old Testament. One does not bring a "shame offering" to the priest. Nor is this restoration mediated through another. It is simply stated that God will accomplish or has accomplished it. Thus, as the one shamed, the emphasis for the one abused should be toward the restoration of her healthy pride.

There are however aspects of shame and honor that are problematic for victims of abuse. For Israel, the restoration of honor had specific connotations. It meant returning to the land, being secure within it, enjoying the abundance of a fertile land, and honor among the nations.

However, the specifics of Israel's experience of shame and honor point to what is a weakness is Thorpe's position. He does not acknowledge that shame is socially conditioned. One is not born with an innate sense of *what* is considered shameful. It is important to critique traditional views of sin, particularly as they lead to the victimization of women. This is critical for healing the shame women already experience. But alongside this we also need a critique of what is defined as shame and honor. This is also part

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of the problem. Why are we taught to respond with shame to abuse? Why are we taught that it is honorable to have power over another person?

There is another problematic aspect to the restoration of honor from the Old Testament perspective. Thorpe states that one of the things that distinguishes shame from guilt is that in shame, unlike guilt, the "lex talionis," the rule of punishment identical to the offense, does not obtain (1991:11). Unfortunately this is not true in the Old Testament. There is frequently a very clear see-saw, tit-for-tat, process that occurs in the restoration of honor. In contrast to the perspective that the restoration of honor is accomplished by God's grace, there is the perspective that the way honor is restored is by shaming the shamer. Because Israel has shamed YHWH by going after other gods, so YHWH shall shame Israel (Huber 1983:148-153, 166-170).[5]

As the nations shamed Israel, so shall the nations be shamed in return.[6] The psalmist petitions God to shame his enemies as they have shamed the psalmist.[7]

> Let those who rejoice at my calamity
> be put to shame and confusion;
> let those who exalt themselves against me
> be clothed with shame and dishonor.
> Ps 35:26

The root of such prayers is not only that the petitioner not be put to shame, but be vindicated, that is honored, by having his enemies put to shame.

The function of shaming the shamer in restoring honor is to raise one's own status by lowering that of another. This can be illustrated by the story of Sarai and Hagar in Gen 16:1-16. In the patriarchal culture of the Old Testament, one condition for which a woman will feel ashamed is barrenness. Sarai's "honor" is in the

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[5] See Jer 2:26f, 33-37 and Ezek 20.
[6] See Isa 41:11; Ezek 36.7; Jer 46:24; 48:13; 50:11-16.
[7] See Ps 6:10; 31:18f; 40:15; 53:5; 70:2; 109:28f and others.

bearing of sons. Barrenness is seen both as a sign of God's disfavor and as the failure to live up to the feminine role/ideal of child-bearing (Huber 1983:123-125). To restore her honor Sarai gives her maid Hagar to Abram in order "that I shall obtain children (sons) by her (v. 2)." Hagar, as one of lower status, now finds her status increased when she conceives. She continues to raise her status by further "lowering" the status of Sarai. "She looked with contempt on her mistress (v. 4)." Sarai, now twice shamed, seeks to restore her further damaged honor. She does so by retaliating. She "shames" Hagar by lowering her status below that which Hagar had before she conceived. "Then Sarai dealt harshly with her (v. 6)."

Shaming the shamer reflects the common biblical theme of reversal where the mighty are brought low and the lowly are exalted, e.g. 1 Sam 2:1-10. This theme carries a lot of power for survivors of abuse. Since abuse places one in an inferior position, the theme of reversal can provide healing in that it gives warrant for self-assertion. The abused is the one to whom strength should be given. The question is whether healing accomplished through shaming the shamer is ever appropriate. It would seem that to do so only continues the damage.

Limits of time and space exclude the possibility of further exploring the relationship between the Old Testament perspective on shame and honor and the experience of survivors of abuse. It is my hope that such a dialogue will contribute to the healing of us all.

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Reconceiving Sin:
The Irrelevance of the Bible

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Douglas Thorpe's article, "Brokenhearted: Sin, Shame, and the Damaged Self," raises several stimulating issues. It challenges me both as a student of the New Testament and as a Christian seeking to understand and convey the message of the Bible in the conviction that it is in some way normative for life and doctrine. The article attempts nothing less than a "reconceiving" of the biblical concept of sin in the light of the modern-day experience of women in their relationships with men. Thorpe takes seriously the experience of women and challenges "traditional theological concepts" (Thorpe 1991:1) in the light of contemporary Christian theology. Informed by his analysis of sin, he concludes his article by appealing for a radical restatement of the "Jesus event."

Thorpe's bold attempt at a redefinition prompts my equally bold response. I offer it—as he offered his article—in the interests of promoting an interchange of ideas. We must continually subject the received tradition to intense and searching scrutiny and place ourselves within hearing of the voice of Scripture. This is a most proper task of all students of the Bible and of the Christian heritage. I respond as a member of the fellowship of believers, convicted of the propriety of the task of believers of each generation to be both the reformers and the reformed.

Thorpe analyzes and rejects the concept of sin as it has traditionally received expression in Western Protestant theology. In so doing, he is in company with several feminist writers on the subject—chiefly, Rita Nakashima Brock. These writers maintain that

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traditional theology has formulated the biblical concept principally in terms of the rebellion and self-assertiveness of humanity in its relationship with God. These traditional concepts are derived "nearly (*sic!*) exclusively" from the experience of men. They therefore do not speak "convincingly or redemptively to the particular experiences of women" (Thorpe 1991:1).

In the body of the article, Thorpe commends a definition of sin which eschews the "patriarchal" and biblical categories of rebellion and self-assertiveness. At the outset he informs the reader that he will be drawing on a proposal of Rita Nakashima Brock in her book, *Journeys by Heart* (1988). He will argue that sin "should be understood as damage to the self, brokenness inherent in our relationality" (Thorpe 1991:1). Furthermore, he acknowledges the aptness of "shame" as a "picture of sin and its effects" which can speak more effectively to the experiences of both men and women.

The terms Thorpe has highlighted, such as *rebellion* and *self-assertiveness*, admittedly do appear to characterize males (though not exclusively) more than females. He claims this kind of language will not resonate with women in a patriarchal society who are more prone to self-denial and self-abnegation as socialized reactions to a patriarchal society that denies and rejects attempts at assertion by women.

He is right to an extent. Experience tells us few women have taken up arms against authority. There are no women pirates in the history books and a mere handful of women outlaws. The list of female rebels and self-assertives is a pretty short one. I can think of Deborah, Jael, Jezebel, Cleopatra, Lady Macbeth, Joan of Arc, Bette Davis, and Lucy van Pelt. The revivalist preacher who characterizes his hearers as sinners—"rebels" against a holy God—is more likely to strike a chord with the male members of the audience. The language of rebellion is, I agree, male-oriented. What else could it be? It comes from the world of politics and international intrigue, an arena which traditionally has been a male preserve. By definition, the terminology in our culture—and in the culture of the Bible, as well—carries a male bias.

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The Bible does use a term for "sin" which corresponds in its usage to our term *rebel*. It is more nuanced, however, in its analysis of sinful behavior than Thorpe allows. Gerhard von Rad speaks of three main terms in the Old Testament to convey the sense of "sin." These are עוֹן, חטא, and פשע. The first two are largely interchangeable and have to do, he argues, with failure—human failure toward God and all kinds of failures which occur in relationships between people (see von Rad 1975:262-272, especially 263).

The third of these terms, he continues, is the gravest. It belongs chiefly to the language of politics. The prophets are particularly fond of using the term in their accusation that God's people or their leaders have fractured God's covenant. They conceive this failure as a *collective* failure (i.e., rebellion) to keep their side of their "treaty" with God, the "Great King."[1]

The Septuagint uses ἁμαρτία and παράπτωμα as the main equivalents of the three major Hebrew roots. ἁμαρτία chiefly translates חטא and עוֹן cognates, though it occasionally translates פשע cognates, as in Isaiah 53:5. παράπτωμα, used sparingly, translates several Hebrew roots, including פשע (see, e.g., Ezekiel 14:11)—but never חטא. παράπτωμα (with the more rare παράβασις) appears far less frequently in the New Testament than ἁμαρτία by an 8 to 1 margin). It maintains the relative reserve of the Old Testament in the use of פשע over against חטא and עוֹן. Perhaps the language of revolt struck the New Testament writers as "too political" and too collective in its associations to describe individual instances of failure in interpersonal relationships.[2] As Thorpe points out in his article (1991:11), παράπτωμα and παράβασις attract the English equivalents *trespass* or *transgression,* terms more at home in the realm of

[1] See, e.g., Hosea 7:13; Amos 4:4; Jeremiah 2:8; 1 Kings 8:50. On the purely political level, see 1 Kings 12:19 (Israel's rebellion against Judah) and 2 Kings 1:1 (Moab's rebellion against Israel).

[2] Romans 5:20 uses παράπτωμα collectively of Israel's transgression under the Law. The juxtaposition of παράπτωμα and ἁμαρτία in Ephesians 2:1 suggests that the terms are not entirely synonymous. Unless he is striving for rhetorical effect, the author may well have in mind the Old Testament nuances of these terms outlined above.

property rights than in the sphere of relational breakdown and the failure to love the other.

Though Western theology has formulated the biblical concept in terms rejected by Thorpe and the feminists, it is Western theology—not the Bible, as I hope to have shown above—which is myopic. What if our revivalist preacher, therefore, were to speak of sinners not as "rebels" but as those who live as though God did not exist? What if the preacher described sinners as those who, without reference to God, have decided what they think is best for themselves and for others? Formulating the characterization in this way avoids the loaded terminology of rebellion and captures the essence of sin as presented in Genesis 3 and throughout the Bible. Adam and Eve were not "rebels"; the language of revolt does not enter the presentation. Rather, they were people who decided without reference to God what they thought was right for themselves.[3] They became self-legislating.

The reality of sin is that men and women choose to decide what is right and what is wrong for themselves over against the manner of life God has set before them. They have "knowledge of good and evil." They judge. They discriminate. They choose. It is they, not God, who arbitrate moral choices. (I am following Clark 1969. See also Dumbrell 1984:36-39.)

The tragedy is, of course, that men and women rarely know beforehand the outcome of their choices in the moral sphere. The Bible presents a true-to-life picture of men and women who are out of fellowship not only with God, but with one another as well—as Genesis 3–11 pointedly affirms. In short, the world is the arena of dislocated relationships on both the vertical and the horizontal planes.

Thorpe is correct to set the discussion of sin within the context of fractured relationships. In so doing, as he acknowledges, he stands in line with what the Bible and Western theological tradition has repeatedly affirmed—that personal alienation from God is of the essence of sin (Thorpe 1991:2).

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[3] The terminology of sin and wickedness appears late in these passages. The first instance of the term עָוֹן is in Genesis 4:13 where Cain uses it of his "iniquity." In Genesis 6:5 the writer uses רָעָה of Noah's contemporaries.

Before passing onto other matters raised by the article, I want to underscore what I have argued in the paragraphs above: The language of "knowing (= judging) good and evil" has to do with moral choice. Moral choice is common to men and women. Moreover, where our moral judgments run counter to the divine will, we—men and women—are revealed (in the terms adopted by the Bible) as sinners. As such, we are accountable to God—as much for sins of commission as for sins of omission. As the writers of the Old Testament looked out over their world, they saw self-willed, morally autonomous men and women with whom the writers acted in concert, expressing in multiform ways their inclination to think, choose, and act without reference to God's will.

The same is true, of course, of the world perceived by the New Testament writers. We have already argued that the Bible's concept of sin is not wholly characterized by the language of revolt and concomitant self-assertiveness with its masculine (actually, political and collective) bias. The problem of sin is a *human* problem. It is a problem of human will, of human inclination. To use W. Eichrodt's bold phrase, it is a problem of the "perverted direction" of the human will.[4]

It is a salient point that when the New Testament addresses the problem, it addresses men and women together in the church as equally culpable. Indeed, the New Testament church finds itself in collision with patriarchal social convention. The claim of Galatians 3:28—in Christ there is no male or female—confronts the history of abuse and prejudice and emboldens Paul (and other New Testament writers) to affirm the equal status of men and women as joint heirs of eternal life. These joint heirs were also jointly in need of forgiveness of their sins. Men and women hear both the sentence on their moral autonomy, and the news of the provision of their forgiveness at the hands of a merciful God.

As argued earlier, the Bible knows any number of expressions of sin. Jesus himself characterizes sin as that which defiles, "what comes out of the heart of people" (Mark 7:20). He is explicit. That which comes from within, from the "heart," are "evil thoughts, for-

[4] Eichrodt 1967:387. The question of human "depravity" warrants a reappraisal in the light of this discussion.

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nication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness" (7:21-22). Paul has the same understanding of the scope of sin to which such catalogues as those in Romans 1:28-32 and Galatians 5:16-21 (cf. Ephesians 4:25-31) surely testify. Accordingly, to narrow the scope of sin to what men do to women (abuse them)—and to how women respond to that abuse—is to impose an unwarranted stricture on the discussion. This constriction is not reflected in the Bible. It treats the *whole* of the life of a man or a woman as the arena in which sin might be committed. We have usurped the divine prerogative of moral choice.

Undoubtedly, the question of abuse is becoming ever more acute in our generation, as a recent *Newsweek* article (July 23, 1990) on the subject written in the light of the New York Central Park jogger trial contends. But this particular manifestation, for all its horror and wickedness, is not the essence of sin. The sin of the abuse of women by men, as ugly and as damaging as such behavior is, does not encapsulate the biblical range of sinful behavior. Certainly men need to hear the current feminist insistence that they participate both in overt and subtle ways to put women down. But Thorpe has elevated to lofty and lonely prominence one particular manifestation of sin.

I am astounded, moreover, that the article should define the particular sin women commit—though derived from the prior violation of men—as complicity in the abuse. "Complicity in violence . . . is also sin, an expression of a damaged self" (Thorpe 1991:21). Should the abused respond to her abuse by self-denial and self-sacrifice, she is guilty of complicity (see Thorpe 1991:22). By thus contributing to the damage done to her, she is revealed as a sinner. The victim who does not exercise "her power to escape situations of abuse and seek healing" (Thorpe 1991:24) is, in Thorpe's terms, a sinner by contributing to the sin of which she is a victim. This I find incredible. I have known abused women who are so bruised, damaged, and lonely that they had no access to the resources—inner and external—of the kind the article summons to women's aid.

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From the outset of the article, Thorpe neatly establishes the parameters upon which his argument will unfold. The Bible speaks of sin in masculine terms out of its patriarchal world view. Thorpe rejects both its language and its world view. This renders irrelevant the New and Old Testament data on the issue before us. I have endeavored to reestablish the Bible's credentials in the debate. I summarize below my points of disagreement with the article.

First, I look in vain for any statement of what Thorpe might regard as normative in the Bible for his discussion of sin. Increasingly—and here I voice a general unease which may or may not be justified—I sense that the data I might deliver to the systematic theologian from the Bible as the fruit of exegesis has ceased to be relevant. I sense this to be the case whether I am dealing with the fundamentalist or the liberal. The data must fit the preconceived theological agenda or be found wanting. Thorpe's article is actually anthropological in its emphasis, not theological. It is the need of the person which dictates what the Bible will be allowed to say.

What is Christian theology but the systematic attempt to make sense of the main ideas of the biblical deposit? What primarily is Christian pastoral theology but the application to the pastoral situation of the fruit of such labor? From where will come the critique of the position espoused in the article? Whence the reforming thrust? Not from the biblical deposit, for it espouses a patriarchal world view. Not from Christian tradition, because its formulations derive "nearly always" from masculine experience. If the source of the critique is both extrabiblical and outside the Christian tradition, what will be the distinctively Christian marks of the new "pastoral theologies" of the 21st century? Perhaps such theologies will not only cease to be Christian in the accepted use of the term, but will eschew the name. Perhaps those adopting and espousing them will have long since sloughed off Bible, creeds, and tradition.

Second, granted that biblical society was male dominated, is there no room for revelation in the Bible—an authoritative revelation true for all time and for all people? Does revelation in no

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way transcend the social matrix in which the Bible was produced? Or are we simply to interpret the Bible as a literary product of its time, so hopelessly mired in contemporary prejudices that it cannot speak to modern people unless it first be subjected to rigorous revision? Indeed, Thorpe does not engage in revision. He does not even envisage the need for revision. The hermeneutical task, the engagement with the biblical text, is laid aside. For Thorpe, the Bible and tradition have surrendered all authority because they have ceased to speak to the experiences of women. If the truth be known, the Bible and Christian tradition never have and never will.

What then are we to do with Jesus? What are we to do with a Jesus who speaks about sin in nonsexist ways and who testifies to a whole range of sinful habits which proceed out of the heart of people? By way of conclusion—or perhaps afterthought—Thorpe contends that Jesus must be revised. His saving and atoning work as presented by the writers of the New Testament must pass muster at the bar of the revisionist. Unless he can address the issue at hand, unless he can speak to the experiences of women, he too must go the way of all flesh.

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Race, Sex, and Shame: Christological Implications

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What kind of savior is envisioned by a notion of sin as shame and damage? The question of christology has heated up among feminist theologians, illumining the gaps between female and male, black and white, affluent and poor, between proposed methods. As a woman and a Euro-American feminist Christian I will apply an analysis of racism to the feminist proposals of Douglas Thorpe and behind him, Rita Nakashima Brock concerning sin, shame, damage, and guilt. My analysis of race and womanist sources is intended to reshape Thorpe's proposed theological notions of shame, damage, and guilt. Finally, what kind of savior is envisioned (soteriology) and who we say Jesus is (christology) will then be considered in light of this changed analysis.

Douglas Thorpe has convinced me that shame has special significance for what Saiving describes as feminine sins: sins that cluster around "underdevelopment or negation of self" (Saiving 1979:37). Shame as damage to self-esteem, as the expression of a wounded self, corresponds well with these. Thorpe connects guilt (which arises from transgressing a boundary and develops later than shame) with sins of pride and willfullness which, Saiving argued, were more typically masculine sins (Thorpe 1991:7). This is an imaginative appropriation of Saiving's argument, carefully nuanced. Thorpe by no means confines the relevance of shame to women, any more than Saiving confines those traits she lists as "masculine" to males and "feminine" to females. Nevertheless, I contend that even these subtle qualifications of the Saiving argu-

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ment are no longer enough—indeed the qualification that femi-
nine sins and the experience of women are not coextensive was
never enough to render the argument adequate. The argument is
flawed because it fails to recognize the distinctive experiences of
women of color.

The idea of generic human experience and generic women's
experience are both distortions. White feminist theology showed
that what male theologians called universal "human" experience
was relevant to the experiences of privileged men. But the correc-
tive concept "women's experience" turned out to be based on a
limited sample of privileged women who were white and middle
class (Grant 1989:195-201). The "feminine virtues" that have been
prescribed for "women" since the Victorian era referred only to
the white "missus" and not the woman slave or post-slavery Afri-
can American woman whose labor was exploited to the utmost by
white society (Davis 1981:11). Douglas Thorpe's connection of sin
and shame reflects white nuclear families and the struggle of white
women with negative self images engendered by sexism. But Afri-
can American women must struggle against the threefold oppres-
sion of sex, race, and class.

Feminist theological method must no longer repeat the racist
failures, mistakes, and sins of the origins of the white feminist
movement. One way to overcome this myopia is through analysis
of race, and reflection on the experience of African American
women whose oppression sheds light on race, sex, and class (see
Hooks 1984). I believe race is a feminist issue (Megill Cobbler
1986). Like Susan Thistlethwaite, who looks for "the difference
race makes" (1989:46), I have asked what difference an analysis of
race makes for a feminist view of shame, guilt, and christology.

THE PROBLEM OF GUILT

Thorpe's emphasis on shame, and Brock's emphasis on sin as dam-
age to self, stem from their reactions against the notion of guilt.
According to Brock, guilt is especially harmful for women. She
writes:

Sinfulness as a category within Christian analyses of humanity is tied to the reinforcement of patriarchal theology. That reinforcement is hooked to the structure of the patriarchal family with mothers at its center. Sinfulness is aligned with blame, punishment, and guilt, and blame has usually been assigned to woman as the originator of sin, or to our maternal, organic birth which must be transcended by a higher, spiritual birth. While such assignation of blame may absolve individual believers of guilt, it carries undertones of both misogyny and self-hate for it puts persons in inner conflict with themselves. (Brock 1989:6)

In this passage a psychological definition of guilt seems to be at work. Guilt is a feeling which ties us to the past, inflicting blame and inhibiting constructive action in the present. This feeling of guilt has harmful consequences. Brock suggests that people begin in inner harmony with themselves until patriarchal religion and its doctrine of sin and guilt put them into inner discord. In order to resolve this feeling of inner turmoil (guilt) people project it, inappropriately, onto others. This projection of blame is known as scapegoating. Blaming women for the entry of sin in the world then functions as a release from blame for men. Guilt is also a form of external control and is better avoided, or if incurred, best gotten over quickly.

There is a difference, however, between what psychologists mean by guilt and what theologians have meant by guilt. A merely psychological notion of guilt bypasses the question of guilt before God and the actual need for a redeemer. I would argue that Brock goes too far in rejecting the validity of guilt as a category for feminist theology.

Brock's focus on the damage done to women in the patriarchal family thoroughly overshadows and gives only lip service to the fact that privileged women—*white and middle class North American women*—are not just victims. They are also oppressors. A psychological concept of guilt is inadequate in the face of this evil. White

racism is real despite the absence of guilt feelings on the part of whites, and the presence of "white guilt" feelings is no assurance of resistance to the system. "Damage" lacks the socio-economic implications of accountability contained in the terms "oppressors" and "oppressed." The impact on each group cannot be summarized as "damage" for the consequences are different.

Most important, Brock's notion of sin as damage functions to overcome the important Christian idea that sin has reference to God first and foremost. According to Brock, damage happens to us and we are therefore not culpable:

> I believe understanding sin as damage enhances responsibility and healing instead of miring us in blame and guilt . . . [sin is] a symptom of the unavoidably relational nature of human existence through which we come to be damaged and damage others. . . .
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> Hence sin is a sign of our brokenheartedness, of how damaged we are, not of how evil, willfully disobedient, and culpable we are. (Brock 1989:7)

If there is no sin before God, and no guilt before God, all that remains is human relationship. The undesirable features of unnecessary guilt, which I take to mean guilt feelings, are alleviated in Brock's theology, but at a great cost.

THE PROBLEM OF SALVATION

The Christological implication of viewing sin one-sidedly as damage is that incarnation and atonement are unnecessary, as is salvation in the traditional sense. What kind of savior is envisioned, with this conception of sin? For Brock the community is Christa, the Christ (Brock 1989:67-69). Jesus, the healer, models the kind of horizontal healing and reconciliation any of us must now attempt. But he is not the Christ, not God incarnate, not savior or divine co-sufferer. No particular individual could be this for Brock. Jesus "participates in" erotic power but does not reveal it.

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Hence what is truly christological, that is, truly revealing of divine incarnation and salvific power in human life, must reside in connectedness and not in single individuals. (Brock 1989:52)

And,

The death of Jesus reveals the brokenheartedness of patriarchy. . . . It is neither salvific nor essential. It is tragic. (Brock 1989:98)

What is salvific is community.

This approach is inherently inconsistent in that Brock identifies relationality as both the cause and the cure for sin as damage. Brock writes of relationality as our "original grace" but also says that our relationships "have the capacity to destroy us" (Brock 1989:7). Moreover, this communal soteriology does not solve the problem of sin understood as guilt before God. Without reference to God there is no true doctrine of sin, and no guilt. Racism, understood as sin, is not only an offense against African Americans; it is a sin against God. It has pernicious consequences for oppressor and oppressed, though these are different and unequal. For white women this means that they are victims of sexism, but oppressors with regard to race. White feminists cannot portray themselves only as victims, when historically white women had power over African slave women. This legacy continues in domestic service, the economy, and the workplace.

WHITE RACISM DEFINED

In the American context, racism is white racism, and I use the term with that understanding. I have adopted Joel Kovel's definition of racism as: "the tendency of a society to degrade and do violence to people on the basis of race, and by whatever mediations exist for this purpose" (1984:x). White racism is a historic pattern in the United States which has many roots and manifestations. White rac-

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ism underlies the very notion of race, and the psychology of race through which it works (Kovel, 1984:ix-x). Racism is not simply a matter of prejudice, but operates in part through prejudice. White racism, according to Kovel, has gone through three identifiable though not exclusive stages in the United States. *Dominative* racism is characterized by "physical oppression and sexual obsession" (Kovel 1984:xi); dominative racism was manifest in the Old South but resurfaces anywhere in violent bias incidents. *Aversive* racism involves "coldness and the fantasy of dirt" (Kovel, 1984:xi); the pattern is typical in Northern cities, suburbs, and towns. *Metaracism* operates through the seemingly impersonal forces of a technological society and economy; it does not require prejudice, but it does not exclude the other forms of white racism (Kovel 1984:xi).

SHAME AS AN ASPECT OF WHITE RACISM

During slavery, dominative racism was carried out through law and sheer brutality. Rebellious slaves were beaten and tortured. Black women slaves were beaten, tortured, and raped. Rape is not an act of sexual desire, but of brutality; rape was administered to enslaved women as the ultimate humiliation, to shame them and break their will. It also shamed the enslaved men who were powerless to protect others from torture and rape.[1] Rape also reproduced slavery literally and cheaply; the refusal of black women to acquiesce included induced abortions (Giddings 1985:46). Rape involved overt sexual domination, shaming, and procreative exploitation of enslaved African American women for the preservation of slavocracy.

Aversive racism is also related to shame. One study estimated that some four-fifths of Americans hold some racial prejudice. Racism cannot be reduced to psychological disorder (Clark 1963:71). Yet there is a connection between intense prejudice and shame. In white racist society whites whose own achievements are

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[1] Yet women did resist slavery in many ways, which included fighting off master's sexual assaults. The oral history of these battles was preserved in many families (Davis 1981:22-24).

minimal may still distract themselves from failure by feelings of superiority toward African Americans (Clark 1963:74f). The classic Gordon Allport study of prejudice shows the interplay of anxiety and blaming. Workers who were shamed, frustrated, and economically insecure themselves used race to scapegoat others (Blacks and Jews) and attempt to relieve their own pain (Allport 1954:223f, 349). Even members of ethnic out-groups sometimes vented anger at other out-groups, such as African Americans (Allport 1954:153f).

The psychological cost was exacted on African Americans. A study of northern preschool children done in 1964 indicated that white children associated dark skin with dirt and inferiority. African American preschoolers tested also made this association. They had learned some of the negative social messages of aversive racism which set them up for low self-esteem (Kovel 1984:86).

The famous "dolls test" was later cited in a footnote of the Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas decision in which the Supreme Court ruled that segregation of public schools on the basis of race unconstitutional. In the test African American children were shown a white and brown doll. Two thirds of the children were able to choose correctly the doll that looked like them. But when asked to choose the doll that was "nice" or a "nice color" or that they liked better the majority showed a clear preference for the white doll (Clark 1963:22-24).

The difference an analysis of race makes in the view of sin as shame is that shame and shaming is not just a dysfunction of the white nuclear family: *it is also a function of white racist society.* Shame among lower class whites is manipulated by scapegoating other races. This defuses possible anger against the socio-economic system. Shame means the assaults on the self-esteem and chances for success of African American chidren, who are the future of the community. White fantasies associating dirt and inferiority with color are the estate white society bequeaths to black children.[2]

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[2] Traditionally, the care given from birth onward in African American families has helped infants develop positive inner feelings toward the self. This aids survival in the racially hostile society, and is the "core" on which a positive racial identity is

Shame understood as a psychological category points us to a stage of development prior to that of guilt. Shame understood in the context of white racism means that we cannot avoid the question of guilt. Kovel's categories make it clear that racism is not simply a matter of psychology. In discussions of shame, guilt, and the Christ, socio-economic factors must also be considered.

RACE AND WHITE FLIGHT FROM GUILT

Racism is sin because it denies the dignity of human beings created in God's image, human beings who are also objects of God's saving activity in the incarnation, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This denial of dignity produces material and psychological advantage for whites at the expense of African Americans. Racism is a distortion of community and a departure from God's intention in creation. The oppressor usurps the place of God. It is one sin among many which express a wrong relation to God. Though it is not the only sin, it is not incidental to but rather an integral part of American history. Yet among American churches only the black churches (Paris:1985) have consistently defined racism as sin throughout their history. White churches' alliance with white racism is as deep as their silence about racism. Resistance is a part of their history, but it has been sporadic. The failure of white churches to define racism as sin includes a denial of guilt. In our analysis the alliance is a state of sin and guilt. In dominative racism, the alliance is open and virulent in its hostility to all but whites. The prejudice of dominative and aversive racism is in fact a method of justifying all that is white by splitting and projecting evil and guilt on those who are brown and black. It is a false gospel. Metaracism fulfills this pattern economically despite the decrease in overt prejudicial feelings.

A theology that takes the sins of racism and sexism seriously calls white feminist Christians to resist securing their identity on the

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built. Pride in blackness and African American heritage is the way African American parents and families combat racist stereotypes that engender shame (Comer and Poussaint 1975:23-26).

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false gospel of race and class privilege. It calls all women and men to resist securing their identity on the basis of gender privilege. Christian identity is based only on the saving work of Jesus Christ. It also calls for the transformation of social structures and the healing of relationships.

CHRISTOLOGICAL DIRECTIONS

What kind of savior is envisioned if racism and sexism are sins against God? If an analysis of race reveals the hidden racist function of shame, the healing of shame and the healer/savior must reflect this cruel truth about our society. Overemphasis of interpersonal and family dynamics reflects a white context and ignores racism. The Christ who heals shame must have something to say about the oppression of African American women and men. This Christ must speak to the experiences of African American women as well as white women.

What can we say about Jesus and shame if racism and sexism are feminist issues? Jacqueline Grant's book *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus* (1989) affirms the role of Jesus as divine co-sufferer with oppressed African American women. The prayers of slave women testify to a Jesus who knew in his flesh sufferings like theirs. This Jesus was also God identifying with them over against the totalitarian claims of white society on African American bodies and souls (Grant 1989:212f).

Within a tradition that clearly identified racism as sin, Jesus of the scriptures is the source of sure identity and self-esteem. The religious community "lived out" this theology. Acts of care and political concern showed the sustaining role of the community, but this took place in the context of God's action in Jesus, "in Jesus' name." Grant remembers:

Hence the personal commitment I made to Jesus as a youngster was not one that restricted me as a black person or as a female, but affirmed me and projected me

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into areas where, I later learned, "I was not supposed to go" by virtue of my race and gender. (Grant 1989:ix)

This Jesus was not allied with racism, but affirmed those who suffered oppression of race, sex, and class.

It is important to note that much more can be said about sin and about Jesus. But for those who struggle every day to survive the assaults on their black and brown and female persons, it is the place to begin.

The implied universality of African American women's experience is a vision of the world from the underside. This world is only seen through a particular history of shame, pain, struggle, and courage. Christian faith proclaims that God chose to meet the world through the underside, in Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

In a feminist theology that takes racism and sexism seriously, the psychological insights on shame cannot replace the theological notion of guilt in the doctrine of sin. An analysis of race and of the experiences of African American women discloses that the community is the context for the healing of shame and the recovery of self-esteem. But this happens also in the presence of God through Jesus. Oppressed African American women testify to a Jesus that identifies with them in suffering, and, as God, affirms them as full persons.

As a Euro-American feminist Christian I want to affirm these insights as correctives to a tendency in white feminist theology to deify the feminine or the community of "women." Community is the context for salvation; it cannot be the savior ("Christa"). Our particular history regarding race shows that it is inadequate.

God in Jesus Christ offers all people a new identity. Basing our identity on the saving work of Jesus Christ first of all casts light on our own sins and pain. Only as we are convicted and set free from these as determinants can they be transformed into possibilities for love, service, and resistance.

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Sin and the Self:
The Relationship Between Damage
and Guilt in Christian
Understandings of Redemption

GREGORY W. LOVE

Douglas Thorpe's discussion of sin is strong in its claim that sin should be understood as damage to a person's self. This damage occurs through our relationships, particularly those early in life, and leads to shame, needing the response of healing rather than condemnation. Thorpe contrasts this view to the more traditional view of sin as willful disobedience to God—an act that leads to guilt and needs divine judgment and forgiveness. Thorpe, however, seriously wounds his argument when he claims that his understanding of sin as damage to the self is to *supplant* rather than to *enrich and complement* the understanding of sin as willful disobedience to God. In this essay, I will first briefly discuss the main strength of Thorpe's argument. Second, I will discuss the weaknesses found in Thorpe's attempt to describe the relation between sin as guilt and sin as shame in his doctrine of sin. Third, I will suggest why the doctrine of sin is seriously diminished when willful disobedience is not included as a dimension of human sin. Finally, I will present an alternative framework in which to understand sin, a framework which allows sin to be seen as both willful disobedience and damage to the self.

I. SIN AS DAMAGE TO THE SELF

Douglas Thorpe is right when he charges that the Christian tradition has emphasized sin as prideful self-assertion which leads to

rebellion against God, guilt before God, and the need for justification. Furthermore, it has underemphasized the dimension of sin as damage to the self which leads to shame before God, self, and others. The damaged self therefore needs healing. By overemphasizing the dimension of sin as prideful self-assertion, those persons who are systematically oppressed or who already lack a healthy sense of themselves are blocked from the anger, self-assertion, and self-love necessary for their healing. Overemphasizing sin as willful disobedience is especially destructive to oppressed people, such as women:

> As Mary Potter Engel demonstrates, traditional definitions of sin have created particularly serious obstacles to the struggle of abused women. Viewing sin as disobedience, for instance, tells women that disobedience to their abusive husbands is improper. Viewing sin as pride or self-love multiplies the self-blame and self-hatred often felt by victims of violence.
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> . . . The point is that people with weak or fragmented selves, the condition of many women in a sexist society which denies women full opportunity for self-development, need to be encouraged to self-love and healthy self-assertion. Holding up self-sacrifice as virtuous and decrying self-assertion as sinful only perpetuates oppression. (Thorpe 1991:6)

This critique of the traditional view of sin is also given by Saiving, Plaskow, Ruether, and other feminist theologians. They have challenged theology to find richer expressions of its doctrines of sin and salvation. Thorpe, however, generalizes when he thinks that the tradition views sin only as pride. The problem is not that the tradition has failed to speak of aspects of sin beyond pride. In fact, when theologians such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, and Reinhold Niebuhr speak directly on the doctrine of sin in their theologies, they present a multidimensional view of sin. For example, in Barth's discussion of sin in the *Church Dogmatics*, Barth does not describe sin simply as "pride"; instead, Barth

describes sin as including "sloth" (IV/2:§65) and "falsehood" (IV/3.1:§70) as well as "pride" (IV/1:§60), with the category of "sloth" suggesting that self-abnegation is an aspect of human sin as well as prideful self-assertion. In "The Sloth and Misery of Man" (IV/2:§65), Barth insists that not only prideful self-assertion, but also mediocrity or triviality is itself to be described as sin, and this sin does indeed lead to shame (IV/2:391-393). In particular, the sin of sloth is sinful precisely because it brings on the dissipation of the self. Sin as sloth means the refusal "to make use of the freedom to be a whole human being," the refusal to live in the liberating power given in Jesus Christ (IV/2:453-455). Barth sees the sinful aspect of sloth not simply in that it leads to self-destruction, but also because that self-destruction destroys our possibilities for relationships with God, with others, and with time (IV/2:460-464). Without these relationships, we lose our human essence. Thus, it is clear that Barth is aware that self-abnegation is destructive of our selves, as is prideful self-assertion.

The problem with these traditional theologies, however—a problem which Thorpe and Plaskow rightly point out—is that throughout the rest of their systematics, these theologians tend to write as if only one dimension of sin is applicable to the discussion: sin as prideful rebellion against God. The implications of the other dimensions of sin—sin as sloth and as falsehood—on the other doctrines are not as rigorously drawn out as are the implications of pride. The message that is conveyed, then, is that sin is pride. What is needed in systematic theology is a view of sin which is multidimensional, and a theology where that multidimensional quality of human sin is then carried through in a balanced way to the discussion of all the theological doctrines.

II. THE RELATION BETWEEN SIN AS DAMAGE
AND SIN AS PRIDEFUL SELF-ASSERTION

At times, Thorpe seems to be arguing for the needed multidimensional doctrine of sin by suggesting the addition of "damage" to "prideful self-assertion" in our understanding of sin. At other

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times, he seems to argue for the replacement of "sin as pride" with "sin as damage to the self," thus still leaving us with a one-dimensional view of sin. Thorpe's presentation of his position on sin is inconsistent.

A. SIN AS MULTI-DIMENSIONAL

On many pages, Thorpe writes as if a definition of sin as damage to the self which leads to shame and which needs healing is to supplant the older, traditional view of sin as willful self-assertion (Thorpe 1991:24f). Sin as damage to the self is a "revision" of, rather than an enrichment of or addition to, the view of sin as self-assertion (1991:26).

In those passages where Thorpe says that sin as damage replaces sin as guilt, his statements concerning the nature of human sin become contradictory. Thorpe's discussion of Brock's book *Journeys by Heart* (1988) provides one example. Thorpe quotes Brock, who says that "we participate in destruction when we seek to destroy ourselves or others," but goes on to say that both the violent perpetrator of violence and the victim are "held responsible" for damage to relationships. However, Brock also says that sin is not a sign "of how evil, willfully disobedient, and culpable we are. Sin is not something to be punished, but something to be healed" (Brock 1988:7). Against Brock, Thorpe says individual responsibility for sinful actions "is not maintained in the context of blame and guilt, but in the context of brokenness and damage and the power of our interrelatedness to both convey but also heal the damage" (Thorpe 1991:10).

What I find contradictory in both Brock's and Thorpe's statements on sin is this: To speak of our "participating" in the destruction of others and ourselves—and of our "responsibility" for our acts—is to speak to some extent of our willfulness in those destructive acts. And if we speak of a degree of willfulness, we have to speak also of a degree of blame, guilt, and culpability for our participation in those destructive acts. It is thus contradictory to speak of our participation in and responsibility for destructive acts, and

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yet deny that "blame" is to some extent an appropriate category in the discussion. Perhaps Thorpe speaks of shifting from "the context of blame and guilt" for understanding human sin to "the context of brokenness and damage" not because he wishes to drop the category of guilt entirely, but because he wants to prevent broken persons from "becoming mired in blame and guilt" (Thorpe 1991:9f; quoting Brock). If this is his intent, however, he needs to speak of the concept of sin as damage as enriching and complementing the concept of sin as self-assertion, and drop his language of "replacing" the category of blame with that of damage.

B. SIN AS BROADLY CONCEIVED

Thorpe also speaks as though sin as self-assertion will continue to be a category for our understanding of sin, but placed within the larger framework of understanding sin as damage. For example, Thorpe admits that acts of self-assertive unbelief and pride are part of an understanding of sin, though they are inadequate on their own as categories for understanding sin (Thorpe 1991:3f). A short time later (1991:5), Thorpe quotes Saiving and Plaskow, who admit that some people, especially males, can be driven by self-assertion and thus need to be called to self-sacrifice and obedience. Thorpe says that we should not focus only on a male abuser's guilt; the word "only" implies that guilt is still to be seen as a dimension of sin alongside damage as a dimension (Thorpe:25).

However, even when Thorpe allows for two dimensions of sin—sin as damage to the self which leads to shame and sin as willful self-assertion which leads to guilt—Thorpe conceives of the relation between the dimensions in only one model or proportion: the dimension of sin as damage that was done to the self through relationships in childhood is always greater than the dimension of one's own willful, sinful contribution to a destructive act. Guilt is only a minor key in a symphony where the major theme is damage to the self and the self's experience of shame. Because the dimension of damage done by others to the self is always greater than

the dimension of a person's own willful contribution to a sinful act, this implies that a person never commits a destructive act which is greater than or beyond the damage she or he experienced as a child. It is this model of a greater proportion of the dimension of damage over the dimension of willful self-assertion which is behind Thorpe's view that men would not damage others unless they too were damaged (1991:24-26). This model of a greater proportion of damage compared to willfullness in sin also explains why Thorpe's ultimate category for sin is not blame and guilt, but shame and damage to the self. We only will sinful acts because we were first broken by others; it is not because there is evil in our hearts: a quality of evil left unexplained even when all the damaging experiences and connections to others and to society are outlined. "Sin as damage to the self . . . leaves us with no one to blame," Thorpe writes (1991:26). We are to recognize "our responsibility for our healing, not our blame for guilt."

III. SIN, WILLFULNESS, AND GUILT

Both of the problems discussed above reveal the troubling direction Thorpe is taking in his doctrine of sin: our own willfulness in sinful acts is moved from a primary to a secondary position, if not lost altogether. This theological move by Thorpe does not enrich the doctrine of sin; rather, it diminishes it.

Perhaps the most disturbing sentence is Thorpe's definition of sin, accepted from Brock's book *Journeys by Heart* (1988):

> Sin is actions or attitudes that arise from our damaged selves, causing and perpetuating damage, breaking relationships, severing us from connection with one another and leaving us alone. (Thorpe 1991:10)

It is the passive construction of the sentence that is so disturbing to me in this discussion of sin. There is no "I" in this sentence, no personal subject of the sentence. It is not "I" who causes and perpetrates damage; it is not "I" who breaks relationships, severs con-

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nections with others, and ultimately leaves myself alone. Rather, "sin" is the subject of the sentence, a subject that does not originally and ultimately arise from within me, but comes from outside of me, grabs me as a passive object, warps me, and continues to wreak havoc on my life. Sin itself causes the breaking of relationships and the destruction to myself, and through me to other persons, to nature, and to my relationship with God. True, Thorpe places Brock's definition of sin within an emphasis on the relational character of our lives and the connections with others by which both sin and grace impact us. It is also true that Thorpe's description of sin describes well the corporate aspects of sin, the very aspects which Brock and Thorpe believe the tradition has neglected in focusing so heavily on the individual aspects of sin. But a definition of sin which describes only the corporate aspects of sin is just as shallow and distorted as one which describes only the individual aspects.

The theological tradition has diminished its view of sin whenever it has only talked about the "I," the individual who sins. It has presented a distorted view of sin when it has only seen the individual as a solitary agent who willfully and purposefully seeks to damage others only to fulfill its own self-interest. But a doctrine of sin is also diminished if it does not admit that, embedded in and beyond the ways a person has been damaged by others and by the sinful structures of society, there is a *willful, voluntary* dimension to sin. There is a dimension of sin in which people know that if they continue to do something, they will hurt themselves or others. And yet they choose to do it anyway, because they want to fulfill their own desires. For example, for two months during the summer of 1990 a Cyprian-owned shipping company reneged on its contract to pay wages and denied its Bangladeshi crew such necessities as food, water, heat, and medical treatment in order to increase profits. One man almost froze to death because the ship had no heat during 40-degree weather, and another nearly lost his foot due to an untreated burn. Does it fully explain the sinful behavior to say that the owner of the shipping company, or its board of directors, treated humans this way to increase profits only because they were

"damaged" in early childhood experiences? Does not the company's willful desire to increase its own profits play a large part in this sin? There is a dimension of sin in which a person knows the good, but does not choose it. Scripture does not explain why this happens, this refusal to choose and to do the good, but the voice throughout scripture, especially in the Old Testament prophets and in Paul's theology, says that it does.

And perhaps Thorpe is aware that all blame for sin cannot be pushed on someone else. Thorpe quotes a section from Helen Lynd's book *On Shame and the Search for Identity* where she describes how violent acts of abuse by men upon women lead the men to experiences of shame. Thorpe quotes Lynd:

> It is not an isolated act that can be detached from the self. It carries the weight of "I cannot have done this. But I have done it and I cannot undo it, because this is I." (Thorpe 1991:23f; quoting Lynd)

But perhaps what Lynd in her quote reveals about shame is that shame is the lens through which we see the multi-dimensionality of our own sin. We see that our sinful acts are not so easily separated from who we are at the core of our personhood. We see that our personhood was shaped by connections with others in our past; here Thorpe is right. But in our experience of shame, we recognize a further dimension; we realize that neither circumstances of the present, nor damage done to us in the past, fully explains why we do some sinful acts. We recognize that beyond these other influences, we willfully chose the sinful act. We find ourselves responsible.

IV. A STANDARD AND FRAMEWORK FOR OUR UNDERSTANDING OF SIN

Thorpe charges the tradition with a one-dimensional view of sin; yet Thorpe himself also commits this same error when he replaces sin as prideful self-assertion with sin as damage to the self, rather than coordinating the two. If theology is to avoid a one-dimen-

sional view of sin, it needs a standard by which to judge what is sin and what is not. That standard is found in the intention which God has for God's creation. It is only when we see how creation is intended to be that we can then recognize the ways that sin has distorted that divine intention. God's intention for creation cannot be found through an observation of creation or of human experience; the divine intention can be found only where God reveals it. If we look to the scriptures as witness to God's self-revelation, three areas come to mind which reveal God's intention for creation. We could discover a norm for judging sin by looking at God's intentions for creation as revealed in the creation stories of Genesis. Second, we find a norm for recognizing human sin in the doctrine of redemption, specifically in God's act of redemption in Jesus Christ. A third possible doctrine which might reveal God's intentions for creation, thus providing a norm for recognizing sin, is the doctrine of eschatology. For example, what does this third area, the doctrine of eschatology, reveal about God's intention for God's creation, and thus the sinful dimensions of the creation as well? In *God in Creation*, Jürgen Moltmann says that God's eschatological intention for creation is what Moltmann calls "The Sabbath of Creation" or the "Feast of Creation"; the eschatological goal is the indwelling of God within a healed creation (Moltmann 1985:13-16). God's goal is relational; it is the communion between God, humans, and nature.

If communal relationship is God's intention for creation, there are three ways this relationship can be broken. First, a relationship between two persons can be broken if one person tries to destroy the other; this "destruction of the other" is found in the sin of pride. But a relationship between two persons is also broken if a person tries to destroy herself or himself, thus making a relation between two fully human persons impossible; this is the sin of self-abnegation. Finally, a person may recognize that two human selves exist, but deny any relation between them; this is the sin of falsehood.

This eschatological, relational framework for understanding God's intention for creation provides theology with a concrete

norm by which to recognize sin. The framework also enables theology to talk about sin in multidimensional terms. God's intentions are distorted by both pride and self-abnegation. Experiences of both guilt and shame provide warnings that these divine intentions are being transgressed. Finally, this eschatological, relational framework, which envisions God's intention of the indwelling of God within a healed creation where humans and nature care for one another and together praise God, enables theology to talk about salvation in multidimensional terms. Those who have destroyed themselves shall be built up; those who have "puffed themselves up" shall be brought low (1 Cor. 4:7, 18). And God shall do both of these so that we may live as we were created to live—in relationship with one another, with God, and with the created world.

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Sin, Pride, and Shame:
A Short Historical Response to
Douglas Thorpe

ALLAN C. LANE

In this short response to Douglas Thorpe's discussion of sin and shame I have three goals: first, to show that the idea of pride as the heart of sin, at least in one stream of the western Christian tradition, is more than an exclusively male-oriented doctrine. It relates to the self-understanding of every human individual, and, as defined in this part of the tradition, embraces a healthy self-concept based on true self knowledge that precludes both an excess and a deficiency of self-confidence. Second, that sin as damage can be understood as part of an older and more profound concept, that of original sin. I will not, however, be able to enter into the all too complex question of how original sin came about. Finally, I want to discuss the concept of shame, showing that it is not only consistent with this tradition, but in fact is enlightened and healed by a proper understanding of the tradition.

Those who oppose understanding pride as the heart of the doctrine of sin often do so on the grounds that pride is a characteristically male sin, and that its opposite, the virtue humility, is no virtue at all for women, since it leads to a devaluing of female worth in the face of male self-exaltation. If this were so, the idea should be abandoned immediately. However, while the tradition has often been mistakenly used in this way, the essence of pride cannot be identified with male self-exaltation, nor can the essence of humility to be identified with the sense of worthlessness so often attacked. Those are caricatures of this line of tradition, and, like caricatures,

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they resemble the subject enough to be recognizable, but should not be mistakenly taken for portraits.

Both pride and humility are used as shorthand notations for the doctrine of sin which underlies them. By a brief adumbration of the leading features of the ideas of pride and humility in the writings of Augustine, Bernard, and Calvin, it will soon become clear that this part of the Western tradition retains great insight and forcefulness for both women and men.

SIN IN AUGUSTINE

For Augustine, sin is found most characteristically in pride. Sin, for Augustine, is the turning away from what is higher towards what is lower, from eternal God to passing things. The doctrine of sin is meant to explain what we see manifestly about us: that God is everywhere ill-esteemed and little noticed, and that the things of this world, its sensual delights and pleasures, are everywhere trumpeted. Sin is a looking in the wrong direction for the meaning of life, an enjoyment of things which are to be used to get to the highest good, God, who alone is to be enjoyed (*On Christian Doctrine*:18f, 27f). In this context, enjoyment results in an end to our restlessness. We must direct our mind's eyes upwards to God, for Augustine thinks that we become what we hold before our mind's eye (*Soliloquies*:30-33). If we rest our sights on temporal things, we shall remain temporal and fleeting, but if we lift the eyes of our mind up to eternal God, we become eternal in the vision of God, because we participate in eternal truth in our minds. It is impossible, however, to raise our eyes without God's grace, for our wills, which direct the mind's thoughts, have been damaged and cannot turn our mental eyes in the proper direction (*On Free Choice of the Will*:128). In Christ, God provides grace to lift our eyes. Pride in Augustine represents a false estimation of our capacity, the conception that we do not need to rest in God's grace because we think that we can find rest and enjoyment in temporal things. We do not know our own ability, or rather inability, to live the kind of life which would lead us from the ephemeral things of this world to

the eternal life of God. Humility, then, is a correct appraisal of our power and a dependence on God for grace in life.

SIN IN BERNARD

For Bernard, pride and a too-low estimation of ourselves, which he calls "false humility," are the preeminent manifestations of sin. True virtue lies in between these two extremes; it is to know yourself as you really are. Pride is sin because it is ignorance of yourself revealed in an overestimation of your own virtue and merit. False humility is sin because it is ignorance of yourself revealed in an underestimation of your own worth. But what is the proper estimation of our worth according to Bernard? We should know that we are souls made in the image of God but separated from God by sin, ignorance and wretchedness (*Steps of Humility*:50). Sin, ignorance and wretchedness are really almost the same thing for Bernard, for both pride and the sense of worthlessness are manifestations of an ignorance of our own nature. We either overestimate our own worth in pride or underestimate it in false humility and are wretched because we do not know who we are, and we cannot find out. We are released for true humility, which is a right estimation of ourselves, when Christ the Word joins himself to our reason and makes it judge of itself, so that it sees its own wretched state and enters into the true humility which comes with self knowledge and knowledge of God (see esp. pp. 146-159).

SIN IN CALVIN

In the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin sets forth the idea that the sum of the Christian life is denial of self. At the beginning of the *Institutes*, Calvin writes: "Nearly all the wisdom we possess . . . consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves" (I.1.1). In this he sets out what we must know: who God is and who we are. Calvin says that pride and ambition are diseases which cloud our ability to see ourselves clearly in the mirror of Scripture (*Institutes* II.2.11). Pride is a false estimate of who we are, and humility is a true estimate of who we are.

Who are we, then, according to Calvin? The better question would be to ask whose are we? Calvin declares that we are not our own, but God's.

> If, then, we are not our own, but the Lord's, it is clear what error we must flee, and wither we must direct all the acts of our life. . . . We are not our own: in so far as we can, let us therefore forget ourselves and all that is ours. Conversely, we are God's: let us therefore live for God and die for God. We are God's: let God's wisdom and will therefore rule all our actions (*Institutes* III.7.1).

Denial of self, then, is not a depreciation of what we are, but rather a knowledge of whose we are, the recognition that, all our life, "it is with God we have to deal" (*Institutes* III.7.2). We all, says Calvin, "seem to ourselves to have just cause to be proud of ourselves and to despise all others in comparison. If God has conferred upon us anything of which we need not repent, relying upon it we immediately lift up our minds, and . . . almost burst with pride" (*Institutes* III.7.4). Pride, then, in relation to our neighbor is, again, a false estimate of ourselves, thinking ourselves better than another. The root cause of this is our ignorance of ourselves. Humility is thus a true knowledge of ourselves and of God: we know who we are in relation to God and this keeps us from forgetting who we are towards our neighbor.

PRIDE AND HUMILITY

From these three thinkers, it would appear that pride is not merely self-assertion, and that that much-deprecated virtue, humility, is something other than a lack of self-worth. Both pride and the feeling of worthlessness are due to an ignorance of our very selves. On the one hand, we are prone to think excessively of ourselves, and to put ourselves over God's grace (Augustine), God's judgment (Bernard), God's claim on our lives (Calvin). We live in pride. On the other hand, we are prone to think too little of ourselves, and

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do not aim high enough to be all that we can be, do not realize that we are truly the image of God, do not know what a privilege it is that it is God with whom we have to deal throughout our lives. We live in worthlessness. This is false humility. True humility consists in a true knowledge of self. Traditionally, pride could represent the root of sinfulness because it was thought of as an ignorance of oneself, and such ignorance must inevitably lead to broken relationships with God and our neighbor.

ORIGINAL SIN AS DAMAGE

We now move from theories of actual sin to the idea of original sin as damage. The famous controversy between Augustine and Pelagius centered on the depth of the damage caused by original sin, a doctrine which is meant to explain why we inevitably fall into sin towards God and our neighbors. Pelagius claimed that the damage of sin to ourselves was quite slight, and might be overcome by the proper exercise of the human will. Augustine claimed that the damage was much more radical, going to the very center of human experience, and that no amount of willing could undo it, for the will itself was damaged. In 526, at the Council of Orange, the western church finally accepted a modified Augustinian position as being the more profound conception of the power of sin. Yet it continued to insist that sin was deeply embedded in the human reality. While the doctrine of original sin does suggest the image of damage, we must realize that this does not exonerate us from responsibility for our own behavior. That we are damaged goods is the beginning of the doctrine of sin in the tradition, and not the end. Once the damage has been recognized, we must go on to examine its horrendous effects in our lives, distorting everything we will and do. We commit acts of which we are justly ashamed, because they damage us and others even more than we are already damaged. They constitute a denial of our true humanity, as shown in Jesus Christ, and show just how deep the wounds of sin go. It does us no good to say that we are damaged by sin and therefore have no responsibility for the consequences of our actions. Thorpe

is quite right in suggesting that what we really need is healing (1991:25f). But that healing can only come when we know ourselves to be what in fact we are: those who damage and destroy God's good creation. If either pride or false humility obstructs that clear vision of ourselves, we cannot even begin to accept responsibility for our sin, and will not know how urgently we need to turn to Christ.

GOOD SHAME AND BAD SHAME

I have said that there are actions of which we must justly be ashamed. Shame can be incorporated into the vision of the tradition which I have tried to present if we understand it as a valuable emotion in the struggle to know ourselves (Bradshaw 1988: ch. 1, passim). Positively shame alerts us to the limits of our finiteness, tells us that we are human beings and not God. When we overestimate ourselves, and fall flat, shame sets us back in the proper perspective. Shame conquers our pride. But negatively, shame can be very damaging. If shame goes beyond its legitimate place in guiding us to see our mistakes and recognize our finiteness, and instead tells us that we are a mistake, then that underestimation of our own worth sets in which Bernard called false humility. Only in the light of the incarnation of Christ can we avoid sin and see ourselves with a right estimation of our own worth. His human birth assures us that our finite human nature can never again be despised, his life convicts us of our false estimates of ourselves, and his shameful death on the cross leads to our redemption, so that even shame is redeemed.

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The Paradox of Sin
and the Bipolarity of Shame

KATHLEEN D. BILLMAN

Mary Potter Engel likens sin to the Hydra, that mythical monster which sprouted two heads for each head Hercules severed (1990:163). This is a useful metaphor for those who tackle the Christian doctrine of sin, where two-headed dilemmas confront us at every turn.

THE PARADOX OF SIN

One of the most basic of these dilemmas is the paradox which lies at the very heart of the Christian understanding of sin. On the one hand, sin is understood to be radical, inescapable, and universal in human life. There is an element of "tragic and fateful entanglement that goes beyond individual sins as responsible acts" (Pannenberg 1985:281f), which has been analyzed in various ways over the course of history. In recent decades, many liberation theologians have used the term "evil" to distinguish this systemic aspect of sin, which refers specifically to the social, economic, and political arrangements that distort our perceptions and restrain our abilities (Engel 1990:155).

On the other hand, the parallel assertion in Christian doctrine is that human beings bear personal responsibility for sin. Without some margin of freedom on the part of responsible individuals it would be impossible to talk about sin at all, for there would be nothing for which we could be held accountable.

The path which connects the assertion that sin is condition with the assertion that sin is responsible act is "booby-trapped on both

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sides" (Outler 1975:25). A further dilemma is that both the doctrine of original sin and the notion of sin as responsible act have been used against women and other socially designated victims, thus the task of *identifying* and *interpreting* the concepts requires the utmost care (Engel 1990:155).

Douglas Thorpe's reformulation of the Christian understanding of sin (1991) begins with the recognition that traditional images of sin have been used against women. In the light of that recognition he undertakes two tasks: (1) to reformulate the Christian doctrine of sin in such a way that avoids its traditional pitfall—the association between self-assertion and sin, which serves to undercut women's efforts to assert themselves in the face of abuse; and (2) to reconceive the doctrine of sin in a way that will continue to simultaneously address men's and women's experience, albeit in a more accurate manner. He uses the concept of shame to accomplish this, arguing that shame is the most powerful way to talk about sin's "effects" for both women and men; that, in fact, shame's roots are put down in a period of life which precedes the formation of gender identity (1991:13). The point toward which he builds is that sin is damage to the self done to all persons, therefore no one is to blame (1991:26). The responsibility we bear for sin grows out of the realization of our fundamental relatedness to one another and the power this gives us to damage and to help one another; in the face of this awareness we are to seek healing.

It is important to have a theological understanding of sin which does not automatically identify sin with acts of self-assertion. There is also, I believe, a promising connection between sin and shame. The major part of my response will focus on these aspects of Thorpe's work. My own constructive efforts in that regard, however, are framed by two major concerns I have with Thorpe's work—concerns which will come back to judge my own analysis as well.

My first concern is that Thorpe does not take the Hydra-like nature of sin seriously enough. His distinctions between sin as self-assertion and non-assertion, between guilt and shame, and between blame and healing are too neatly drawn. It is true that

theology has tended to blur the distinction between guilt and shame, for example, but there is also a danger in dichotomizing these concepts.

Moreover, both guilt and shame are bipolar concepts; that is, they point to both a healing and disruptive potential in human beings. We can be paralyzed by guilt; we can also be motivated by guilt to seek constructive change. How else, except for the pain we experience when relationships are disrupted, are we challenged to examine our relationships and make constructive changes? Christian theology has affirmed another paradox at this juncture: the moment of God's judgment is also a moment of grace. (Another two-headed dilemma arises at this point: God's judgment does not exist in a completely separate way from judgment mediated by human beings, but neither can it be totally identified with human judgment.)

The second concern I have with Thorpe's work is that systemic analysis does not play any major role in his analysis of sin and shame. He uses terms such as "sexist society" (1991:6), "patriarchal culture" (1991:13), and "society's patterns" (1991:24), but they remain separate from his developmental analysis of shame, as if somehow the experience of socio-cultural realities exists in a way distinct from the developmental process.

This leads Thorpe to posit a period in human development which exists prior to the formation of gender identity, as if human beings are not shaped, from the moment of birth, by patriarchy. Even while there may be critical points in the development of gender identity, from the moment male and female infants are differentiated in hospital nurseries to the way they are held and cared for when they go home, their identities are being formed within the condition of patriarchy.

To complicate matters further, other social realities such as racism, classism, ageism, and ethnocentrism also shape human identity from birth—through parental and family attitudes, of course, but also through the cultural "air" we breathe. This makes terms like "men's experience" and "women's experience" problematic, even when referring to life in the U.S., because African-American

male experience differs in significant ways from Anglo-American male experience; Korean-American female experience differs in significant ways from Native American female experience, etc. (not to mention the differences within cultural groups due to socio-political factors). Although the analysis of sin becomes increasingly complex when we include *differences* in experience, it also helps us to understand the systemic dimension of sin and to locate more specifically where unique "margins of freedom" exist for responsible action in the human community, as well as those places where freedom is severely restricted. Thorpe, creatively, begins with difference, but then collapses difference for the sake of finding commonality.

Thorpe's way of talking about sin as condition (damage inherent in our nature as relational beings) and sin as responsible act (responsibility for healing our shame rather than accepting our blame for guilt) is problematic because sin as "condition" is primarily understood as a consequence of what is passed on from generation to generation (certainly one historical interpretation of original sin, although one which has severe limitations). We are damaged because our primary nurturers cannot adequately meet our needs and mirror our feelings (1991:14). Our selves become structurally deficient (which gives rise to shame) and we inflict these deficiencies on our relationships with others.

Exploring the intrapsychic roots of sin is an important contribution to our whole theology of sin. Archie Smith, in struggling to articulate a black theology of liberation that addresses the internal as well as the external dimensions of oppression (1982) and Jessica Benjamin, who explores how domination and submission are rooted in the psyche as well as the social order (1988), also point to ways that sinful structures are "inside" as well as "outside" us. This is something Thorpe also attempts to explain. Yet unlike the analyses of Smith and Benjamin, Thorpe does not weave together the intrapsychic and interpersonal aspects of sin with the larger socio-political matrix.

Thorpe's failure to weave this larger web of relationships

together with his intrapsychic and interpersonal analysis of sin and shame leads him to "blame the victim," despite his disclaimers. From the intrapsychic, interpersonal vantage point he sees that women have a responsibility to get out of abusive situations and seek healing; that they "do not need to comply with or even passively accept abuse" (1991:21). From a social standpoint, however, this is a most inadequate analysis—particularly for those who counsel women. For it is at the point that women stand up to or attempt to leave abusive partners that violence often escalates against them. In addition, they face a world in which their economic prospects are discouraging and the burden of child care and support generally falls on their shoulders. Pastoral counselors must have a theology and a psychology which takes seriously these social realities.

People are not equally free to act. Those termed "deviant" from society's norms are at risk when they challenge those with greater social power. Yet even here is a mystery and a paradox. There are persons who are, in terms of "external" factors, among the most marginalized of people, yet they act with a greater degree of freedom than many people who have all the "external" factors going for them. God truly uses what is weak in the world to shame the strong (1 Cor 1:27b). There are people who have discovered, amidst the bondage of oppression, the freedom to take incredible risks. Christians have long identified this freedom with a power experienced through our relationship with Christ. How this freedom—this capacity for creative self-assertion—is furthered in the human spirit is a concern which I believe underlies Thorpe's efforts. Locating this margin of freedom, however, is a much more complex task than he indicates.

With this complexity acknowledged, I turn to the connection Thorpe has made between sin and shame. In the following section I will both critique and build on that connection. Given the Hydra-like nature of sin, however, I will conclude with the recognition that my own analysis leaves us with additional Hydra heads to confront.

No one can argue with the fact that shame hurts, that it is a negative, disruptive factor in human experience. Thorpe has presented some vivid descriptions of the ways in which the pain of shame is experienced. He alludes to the ways that culture shames women, and there certainly are a wealth of examples that could be given for the various ways people experience social shame. Shaming serves as a method of social control, and much of this "control" is oppressive and sinful.

But is the only thing we can say about shame that it is a purely negative emotional experience? Certainly Western psychology has been almost uniformly negative in both defining and evaluating the emotion of shame (Augsburger 1986:113). But psychologists from other cultures have challenged this wholly negative description. Some Eastern psychologists have argued that shame is a communally oriented, socially responsive concern for relationship, a caring for harmony, a hope for trust maintained or restored (Augsburger 1986:118). This understanding of shame, like Thorpe's, elevates shame's importance and links it with relationality. Unlike Thorpe's, it stresses its positive function in human relationality. Space limits the development of these cross-cultural issues here, but they merit further investigation.

In his book *Pastoral Counseling Across Cultures* (1986), Augsburger cites two Western psychologists who understand shame to be bipolar; that is, shame has both a positive and negative aspect. For example, shame separates, yet also presses for reunion. Underneath the feeling of shame lies a hopeful core.

> If all self-respect is lost, the feeling of failure or betrayal does not arouse shame but self-contempt. Shame reveals how deeply the person cares. Paul Pruyser expresses it succinctly: "Shame has the seeds of betterment in it . . . it is future-directed and lives from hope" [Pruyser 1968:323]. As [Carl] Schneider concludes: "If one stands judged and accused before one's better self,

one still possesses that better self; while shame may separate the self from the other, it also points to a deeper connection. *In shame, the object one is alienated from, one also loves still*" [Schneider 1977:28]. (Augsburger 1986:118)

In the distinction Augsburger goes on to draw between "conventional" shame (which encompasses the way in which people are shamed socially) and "existential" shame, he describes existential shame as the shame we experience when we fail to express and experience the possible, the potential within (1986:119).

Thorpe has made some interesting connections between shame and the development of human identity. He connects the pain of shame with both damage in our relationality and also to the New Testament concept of *hamartia*, which carries the sense of falling short, missing the mark, or failing to be what one feels one truly is in one's core—in psychological terms, the ego ideal (1991:11f). In the following paragraphs I will expand and develop this theological connection.

In his unfinished *Ethics*, Bonhoeffer defines shame as the "ineffaceable recollection of [our] estrangement from the origin; it is grief for this estrangement and the powerless longing to return to unity with the origin" (1955:20). For Bonhoeffer, no less than for developmental theorists, shame is closer to the "origin" of the development of human identity than conscience, for shame has to do with the underlying connection with God and others. It is this sense of solidarity with God and others that is the true ground for Christian ethics. Because it is through shame that we feel our disunion with God and others (I would also include our disunion with nature), shame has a positive as well as negative value. It points beyond the pain of disunion to union with God and solidarity with the creation.

The problem in this concept of estrangement from the origin is that Bonhoeffer (like all theologians who interpret the creation story as a fall from an original state of unity or perfection to a state of disunity and sin) says that union with God is a movement back

to recover something that has been lost. This is one aspect of the problem Thorpe finds with Tillich, and he draws on Judith Plaskow's work (Plaskow 1980:117) to articulate the concern:

> In particular, the theological root of [Tillich's] concern for creative forms of sin would seem to lie in his ontology and more especially in his view of the coincidence of creation and fall. Since the moment of human self-actualization is also the beginning of the fall, active self-constitution is always simultaneously the realization of estrangement. The failure to act, on the other hand, has no clear ontological claim to be considered sin (1991:8).

There is a way, however, to talk about union with God and others that understands the "origin" not as a state of unity that humanity once had, lost, and must regain, but as that germ of promise, that seed of potentiality and destiny that is present in our humanity as God's image within us. With that understanding, we can find fresh meaning in the idea of *hamartia*, or "missing the mark." Shame exposes the tension between who we have been exposed to ourselves and others to be, and who we want to be and believe that "somewhere" we truly are.

What happens to our theological, social, and psychological understanding of shame if the term "origin" can be set free from the notion of a lost unity which must be recovered? I suggest that "origin" could then represent the origin of all creation in God—the planting of that seed of promise and potentiality which is then set free to discover its destiny in God. Bonhoeffer's provocative line about shame would then read: "Shame is the ineffaceable recollection of our estrangement from the promise present in our beginning, which points us to our ultimate destiny in God; it is grief for that estrangement, and the powerless longing to discover our true identity and destiny in God."

The implications of these theological connections surely need further elaboration. The point remains: shame points to more than the painful "effects" of sin; it is more than the result of the

defective development of the self. Shame also has to do with the cognizance of our very capacity for connection. In the movie *A Dry White Season* there is a powerful courtroom scene. A white lawyer is bringing charges against a white South African police officer for the torture and murder of a black South African. He has managed to procure some unusual evidence—photographs of the tortured body of the man whose family has come to the court seeking justice; the man the police claim has committed suicide. The lawyer holds the photographs in front of the police officer, but notices that the witness in the box stares straight ahead. "What's the matter?" the lawyer asks. "Are you too ashamed to look at these?" For a split second there is silence. As I watched this painful scene I had the sense that this moment of silence held the only promise in the whole courtroom charade. For that split second, everyone in that courtroom waited. Perhaps, if the officer could feel shame, there would be the possibility of human connection and transformation. When that moment passed, the opportunity was lost—except for those few in the courtroom whose shame spurred them to struggle for the first time.

In arguing for this bipolar aspect of shame, I feel the presence of the Hydra again, with its two-headed challenges. Just as with guilt, any theological talk about the positive value of shame opens the door to great misinterpretation; it is easily perverted. Pannenberg reminds us that preaching and teaching on sin in general are protected against perversion "only if they limit themselves strictly to fulfilling their function in the formation of human identity, *where they serve as factors in the process of human liberation* (1985:153, emphasis mine). Where people are already shackled by shame, it is perverse to talk about its positive aspect.

There is one final dilemma in my analysis. I have spoken of the tension between the selves we have been exposed to be (to ourselves and/or to others) and the selves we believe that "somewhere" we truly are. A feminist analysis would critique that distinction, arguing that women are taught that the selves they truly are, are shameful.

Thus, I come full circle to an awareness of the Hydra-like nature

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of sin, and all its complexities. From our various vantage points in this forum, we have named what we see. Such is the nature of sin that none of us sees with perfect clarity. Together, from our several angles, we see more. My hope is that all of our formulations will attempt to serve the liberation of the whole human family, and to identify and articulate afresh how it is that the gospel is still God's profound word about that liberation.

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Book Reviews

Contemporary Biblical Interpretation for Preaching. By Ronald J. Allen. Judson Press, 1984. 157 pages.

In an age of hyper-criticism it is refreshing to come across a book that is as constructive as Ronald Allen's *Contemporary Biblical Interpretation for Preaching.* Though the book is several years old now (1984), it is well worth a look by those who are either teaching introductory courses in preaching, or for those who are wondering how the many and varied methods of contemporary hermeneutics have any validity for the preacher.

Allen's premise for the book is, "We need an approach to exegesis, which is the servant of the work of preaching" (p. 18). Yet he knows that the demands of ministry call for a method that is streamlined and functional, terms by which the historical-critical method has never been characterized. Where is the preacher to turn when the officially sanctioned exegetical method of seminary (historical criticism) proves unwieldy and often extraneous in the trenches of week-to-week interpretation for preaching?

Allen proceeds through twelve tersely written chapters to introduce the many methodologies that are available today for approaching the biblical text. Each method is approached for its positive function in interpretation for preaching without the edge of critique or apparent bias. Each chapter introduces the new method under scrutiny in simple terms, usually with an analogy with which the reader would be familiar. Allen then lists the "Key

Questions" of that particular method. For example, in the chapter on "Structuralism: The Text Manifests Deep Structures," Allen lists these key questions:

1. What are the basic units of the text?
2. What is the situation at the beginning of the text?
3. What is the situation at the end of the text?
4. What is the basic opposition underlying the text?
5. Do elements of the text evoke larger structures which have a role in the text?
6. What transformations take place as the text moves from beginning to end?
7. How does the underlying opposition and its resolution suggest structure and content for the sermon?

A sample exegesis of a biblical text is then given using the method under scrutiny. This section is particularly helpful in that the theory is now put into practice with an actual text. Allen walks the reader through the sample text using each of the key questions as his guide. Finally, each chapter concludes with a very helpful, and surprisingly thorough, bibliography of the best books and articles on that topic.

An amusing printing error occurs on p. 132 when Allen is describing Ricoeur's hermeneutic. Allen writes:

> The meaning of the text can be determined only by looking at the text itself; and the meaning one finds will be determined, in no small part, by one's own situation. Thus, a text has a 'surplus of meaning,' that is, more meaning than can be minded at any one time. This accounts for the experience of returning to a text that is as familiar as one's Phila. 6664 American Politics & Christian Ethics favorite campsite and finding a new shopping center there.

Talk about a "surplus of meaning!"

Some of the disadvantages of Allen's approach are that the reader is not clued into the ideological "worlds of meaning" behind each of the methods explored. The preacher is not made aware of the inherent presuppositions of each method, and thus is ignorant of the slant that each interpretation is given from the outset. There is, as well, the problem of the datedness of the bibliography; but Allen cannot be blamed for that. Neither can he be blamed for not having a chapter on the latest methods to hit the hermeneutical discussion, though this reviewer wonders why he did not include a chapter on literary criticism.

As is inevitable with such a volume, Allen could probably be "nit-picked" to death by experts in each of these varied hermeneutical branches. But he is to be applauded for attempting something that is extremely helpful to the preacher and the student, while risking criticism from his colleagues. The writing style is brisk and clear, and the price is right: $5.95, paper. This book is heartily recommended for preachers, students, and teachers of preaching.

—ANDRÉ RESNER, JR.

Wisdom and Worship. By Robert Davidson. SCM Press and Trinity Press International, 1990. 148 pages.

This recent work, the Edward Cadbury Lecture for 1988-89, delivered in the University of Birmingham, develops the opening chapters of Robert Davidson's earlier book, *The Courage to Doubt* (1983). He now sharpens his focus upon worship in Israel, bringing to this concern the so-called "wisdom" material, that tradition most evident in the books of Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. The stated goal of *Wisdom and Worship* is to "tease out the relationship, if any, between the typically wisdom way of speaking and thinking with its theological premises, and Israel's experience of worship, particularly as that is reflected in the Psalms" (p. 16).

Davidson's study is shaped by Roland Murphy's suggestion that Israel's wisdom was a "shared approach to reality," that is, an out-

look on life that was cultivated in certain scholastic or scribal circles, but was at an early period accepted among other groups as well. And although wisdom has sometimes been defined as "secular," Davidson describes it as an "alternative and equally valid way of doing theology" within Israel's theological pluralism (p. 14). Thus, wisdom in Israel was theological, and was not peripheral.

Most scholars assume a specific setting in life for wisdom thinking, and posit that people who thought this way had some sort of impact on Israel's worshipping cult. But this relationship is variously conjectured. One thesis, shared by such scholars as von Rad, Mowinckel, and Leo Perdue (whose *Wisdom and Cult* Davidson specifically discusses), proposes that materials such as didactic school exercises were developed early in wisdom circles and then, after the exile, were adapted for use in Israel's worship. Or, alternatively, wisdom poems were composed late for use in both school and cult. Sometimes these poems are considered a disintegration of "pure" Psalm types.

With Gerstenberger, Davidson contends that such psalms were composed for liturgical purposes in the first place. However, he further challenges the general notion that worship and wisdom came together late. It is just as likely, he insists, that sages congenial to the cult composed wisdom-like psalms before the exile.

After an opening chapter that explains the rationale for identifying wisdom ways of thinking variously throughout the Hebrew canon, Davidson looks specifically at the wisdom element in the Psalms. He offers two viable ways by which psalms with wisdom traits might have come to be used in Israel's worship:

1) "Those responsible for Israel's worship deliberately used wisdom material because they had a shared approach to reality with wisdom teachers and believed that such teaching contributed insights or raised crucial questions which ought to be central to Israel's experience of worship" (p. 20).

2) The "teacher as worshipper" was a liturgical composer. For even at an early date the sages, realizing that "there is a Wisdom which transcends definition and is known only to God," could have

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sought to explore the frontiers of human understanding "in the context of worship and the community's religious heritage" (p. 23). Though either of these proposals would support Davidson's case, he finds the latter most attractive.

How, then, did such sagely worshippers handle the themes of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes? These were adapted for the cult in one direction by wisdom's "self-confident strand." Chapter three addresses this, including such themes as blessedness, the link between suffering and sin, righteous suffering, education, and God as creator.

"More radical voices of perplexity and protest" also left a mark on Israel's worship. Davidson treats this direction in chapters 4, 5, and 6 in regard to meaning, theodicy, and death, respectively. Here he is especially helpful in showing how the concerns of Job and Ecclesiastes are well represented in Israel's worship material. He also notes three ways in which worship and wisdom material try to sidestep issues of theodicy. But Psalm 73 is a clear example of incorporating questions which challenge the very heart of Israel's faith, right in the midst of worshipping the God who is being questioned.

Davidson questions the assumptions that wisdom elements represent a modification of original poems, that serious theological questioning happened only after the fall of Jerusalem, and that a teaching element in Israel's worship was not present at an early period. He notes, for example, that the case for late wisdom involvement may account for the placement of Psalm 1 at the head of the Psalter, but not for the location of Psalms 37, 49, and 112. Davidson argues well for his thesis and contributes to a growing consensus that wisdom thinking operated through the greater part of Israel's history as a way of doing theology.

As in *The Courage to Doubt*, Davidson urges here that Israelite wisdom was distinctive among the literature of the ancient Near East in its treatment of meaning, theodicy, and death, a matter for which more work needs to be done. There is also continuing need

in the realm of wisdom methodology. While Davidson works with the "shared" aspect of Murphy's valuable suggestion that wisdom be formulated as a "shared approach to reality," the nature of that orientation to reality is addressed only through a discussion of wisdom themes. The source of its distinctiveness will require continued exploration.

The major concern of Davidson is to place wisdom thought within the mainstream of Israel's worship. In this way he contributes to reversing an often negative view of wisdom. Dating the wisdom psalms late has frequently coincided with a depreciatory attitude toward them, an attitude contributing to their ongoing neglect. Wisdom's voices, in particular those of "perplexity and protest," have a critical theological role to play, Davidson believes, one with implications for Christian worship.

Having laid out the biblical material in its cultural setting, Davidson also points the reader to analogous issues in the contemporary context. He is concerned that a burden of guilt is often placed on those who wrestle with tough questions due to life's harsh experiences, and that this guilt is even reinforced by Christian worship (p. 1). The book's final chapter gives examples of contemporary "Songs of God's People" which offer the worship environment as a place to explore doubt and uncertainty.

Like the Psalms, says Davidson, our hymnals should reflect diverse expressions of faith in acknowledgment of our limits before divine mystery: "Worship ought to be the place where, in the midst of our different theological stances, be they traditional, radical or skeptical, we find our oneness in a common acceptance by God and a common reaching out for God" (p. 130). Toward this end, Davidson's work makes a significant contribution.

Davidson gives helpful examples of the texts he discusses and enhances his work at several points by modern analogies to the matters treated. Although his scholarship is well-informed, Davidson makes his presentations carefully enough that the book is suitable for those outside an academic setting.

—DOUGLAS B. MILLER

Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside. Ed. by Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engel. Harper & Row, 1990. 329 pages.

Once in a while you encounter a book which seems to have the potential to turn the world upside-down. Such a book is *Lift Every Voice,* perhaps the first textbook of constructive liberation theologies. For one trained in the reading of theological systems, even the table of contents is a clue that something new is happening here: the *loci classici* are all present, but the ordering is radically different; the authors within the *loci* write from widely differing perspectives and the titles of their articles signal that they write to reflect upon particular communities and circumstances rather than on doctrines as traditionally understood. The editors stress—and the contributors demonstrate—that liberation theology challenges both the method and the content of systematic theology.

Appropriately, then, the first part of the book is on method, and discusses the relationship between method, context, and commitment. The essays in this section reflect the variety of ways in which liberation thinkers are drawn by their commitments to consider revelation, scripture, authority, and the relationship of Christian and nonChristian sources. All of these essays might be characterized as postcolonial: they all attempt to find a Christian voice that speaks to their cultures apart from European mediations.

Part Two is titled simply "God," and it serves as a bridge between method and eschatology. I was struck by the deep practicality of these essays: there were no ontological discussions of the nature of the Trinity, no consideration of the being of God. There are two essays: James Cone's historic "God is Black" essay, and a reflection by Susan Thistlethwaite on the problem of God when nuclear destruction is a human possibility.

Eschatology takes on new power in liberation theologies, as a vision of what God is doing in the world and as the source of "historical hope." It is treated in the third part of the volume, in an essay by Rosemary Radford Ruether that describes the claim of eschatology on liberation theologians. This section is followed by a

section called "Creating and Governing Grace," which deals with problems of sin and evil, and of the relationship between the God whose justice can be envisioned and the distortions that are present in the world as it is.

Part Five, called "Healing, Liberating, and Sanctifying Grace" includes treatments of Christology, church and sacraments, and scriptures. Again these essays are not focused on theoretical constructs or abstractions: they are focused on ways of being, and of bringing healing, to particular people in particular struggles.

Each of the sections is introduced by the editors, and there is a conclusion which describes seven tasks which are a part of the critical dialogue between liberation theologians, as they seek to engage and strengthen each other. There was a deliberate effort to include among the essays representatives of North American liberation theologies, in order to dispel the myth that liberation theology is something which is done "out there." At the same time, the editors do not claim that the collection is exhaustive. In their own words, "Less a definitive statement about liberation theologies individually and collectively, this book is more an invitation to pursue a conversation about what liberation theologies are individually and collectively, and what they might seek to be" (p. 296).

Because the sections are well-introduced and can stand independently, this book could be used in a variety of settings with good effect: as a supplement to a systematic text, by rearranging the ordering; or as is, to raise questions about the relationship between content and construction. The individual essays would also serve well to focus discussions around particular topics, in seminars or workshops.

One does not become a liberation theologian by reading liberation theologies, in the way that one becomes a systematic theologian by reading theological systems. Liberation theologies are constructed through action and reflection, in particular contexts and with particular commitments. *Lift Every Voice* shows the plurality of possibilities within this method common to constructive theologies. In doing so it raises profound questions about the way we train ministers and theologians, in institutions apart from the real-lived

struggles of the communities and people with whom they will be ministering. And this may be the most important contribution of the book: that it challenges the ways we have been taught, and the ways we teach, and suggest that we must end by thinking—and acting—ourselves into a new way of being.

—KIMBERLY PARSONS CHASTAIN

The Johannine Question. By Martin Hengel. Tr. John Bowden. SCM Press and Trinity Press International, 1989. 240 pages.

Who wrote the Fourth Gospel—and when, where, how, why, and for whom? The "Johannine question" is an old, important, and imposing one. Martin Hengel seeks to answer it in this book, which grew out of his 1987 Stone Lectures at Princeton Theological Seminary. We are informed in the preface that the present monograph is but a "preliminary sketch" on the way to a more extensive treatment of the subject soon to be published.

Martin Hengel is professor of New Testament and Early Judaism at the University of Tübingen. He has authored many books, including *Judaism and Hellenism*; *Between Jesus and Paul* (1983); and *The Zealots* ([3]1989).

Hengel's research leads him to three basic theses. First, the second-century traditions about the Gospel are based on fact. This historical witness to the Fourth Gospel "deserves more attention than it is usually given" (p. ix). The discriminating scholar can separate historically reliable tradition from fiction.

Second, the Fourth Gospel is not a community product. It is not the collection of many voices caught mid-sentence. Rather, we hear in it "the voice of a towering theologian, the founder and head of the Johannine school" (p. ix). This gives the Fourth Gospel a unity that unfortunately is usually either ignored or flatly denied today. This figure especially dominates the epistles which most scholars rightly connect with the Fourth Gospel.

Third, the Fourth Gospel is not the product of some "insignificant sect, half-Christian and half-Gnostic" (p. x). It enjoyed "just as good a standing as the Synoptic Gospels" throughout most of

the second century in all parts of the empire (p. x; cf. also p. 6). We see no polemic against other Christian communities or encouragement to separate from other "nonheretical" Christian groups. Rather, "the Johannine school was open to the 'mainstream church' " (p. 50; see also p. 53).

Underlying the three basic theses is Hengel's aim to develop a plausible historical scenario which explains both the historical data and that in the Gospel and epistles. According to Hengel, the author was an outstanding teacher who founded a school which existed between about 60 or 70 and 100 or 110 in Asia Minor. He developed a considerable activity beyond the region and claimed to have been a special disciple of Jesus. This teacher, who bore the common Jewish-Palestinian name of John, attained an extremely great age and therefore was known as "the elder." Special hopes for the *parousia* were also associated with this person.

During his last years there was a crisis in the school. A group of its members, influenced by the view popular among educated Greeks that a god was incapable of suffering, separated the human Jesus from the divine *logos*, Son of God, and Christ, and radically devalued Jesus' significance for salvation. This view was combated in the three letters of John. The school itself quickly dissolved, which makes it improbable that the "elder" founded a separate church (see pp. 80f).

Hengel admits that no one author could have been responsible for the Fourth Gospel in its present form. However, this does not detract from the fact that the Gospel was an "original creation of *a specific personality, a real author*" (p. 84). The main problem with positing a crowd of redactors is that it "blunts and indeed even dissolves" the many forms of dialectic carefully constructed in the Gospel (p. 85). Hengel often returns to this central thesis: "There is one dominant creative and theological authority and teacher behind the Johannine corpus. . . . In favour of [this conjecture] is the unity of style and the impressiveness of the overall theological outline" (p. 93). As Schweizer and Ruckstuhl have shown, the argument from style does seem to bear out Hengel's thesis.

The Gospel's apparent contradictions in theology Hengel attributes to the "elliptical" nature of the author's "dialectical thinking" (p. 94). It is this "basic dialectical theology . . . which gives the whole its tension" (p. 99). According to Hengel, the Fourth Gospel is the first New Testament writer "to take the profound dialectic between the *vere homo* and the *vere deus* as the starting point for his christological thought in all its dimensions—how could such a work fail to be full of tension to the end?" (p. 99).

But what is this dialectic? Is Hengel using the word to excuse imprecision or contradictions? What distinguishes profundity of designed dialectic from imprecision or undesigned contradiction? And can the dialectic of the incarnation really explain all the aporias, the jarring contextual seams in the Gospel?

I find Hengel's emphasis on the unity of the Gospel confusing. Hengel agrees with Alan Culpepper and others that the Fourth Gospel has a literary power that seems to defy source-critical explanations. But what does Hengel mean by unity? He does not mean that some-*one* wrote the Gospel in one or two sittings. Rather, he assumes a long composition history and admits that several passages in the Gospel's final shape should be attributed to later editors. "The different 'strata,' breaks, supposed 'contradictions,' inconsistencies and explanatory glosses are best explained as a result of this slow growth of the Gospel" (p. 95). Besides, Hengel says, we should not expect too much of an early charismatic teacher who did not know how to write very well, even though he was the "greatest theological thinker in the earliest church alongside Paul" (p. 96). So what kind of unity does Hengel mean to suggest? Where is the voice of the towering theologian?

Sometimes Hengel's reasoning is curious: Since Polycarp and Eduard Zeller died at relatively old ages, we should not be surprised if the "old man John" was an eyewitness who died around 100 C.E. in the time of Trajan (p. 133). Hengel also argues that since great authors often contradict themselves and admit their dense incomprehensibility, we should not be so surprised if the

great Fourth Evangelist himself was sometimes dense and incomprehensible!

This book has its share of memorable quotations: "Must all redactors be stupid in principle, people who can only make things worse?" (p. 107). "Of all the possibilities, the most improbable is that in the Gospel we have an almost chaotic hubbub of voices of ecclesiastical redactors, sometimes in conflict with one another, resounding in chorus with stupid interpolations" (p. 101). John Bowden is to be congratulated for his colloquial translation.

Although the book is thin, the writing is thick. It is a book worth pondering and coming back to at a later time. The reader will want to dip into many of the end notes, which are rich in detailed supporting evidence.

In spite of its problems, this is a comprehensive and commendable attempt to answer the Johannine question. Indeed, the scope of its inquiry—including the second-century historical data—is one of the strengths of the book. Above all, it is another voice in the recent chorus emphasizing the unity of the Fourth Gospel and the value of taking seriously its final form. It makes even more acute the need for a renewed examination of the unity of this Gospel which takes seriously the second-century historical evidence, the source-critical evidence, *and* the newer literary-critical studies.

—LOREN L. JOHNS

The Intimate Connection: Male Sexuality, Masculine Spirituality. By James B. Nelson. Westminster Press, 1988. 140 pages.

The current discussion concerning men's issues has left me dissatisfied with its bifurcated opposition of concepts such as masculine and feminine, strength and vulnerability, power and mutuality. For example, in Robert Bly's masterful literary treatise on the mythology of masculinity, the categories of masculine and feminine, male and female, remain functionally oppositional. Among the voices in the emerging men's movement, James B. Nelson is to be highly commended for his insightful and helpful contribution to the dis-

cussion on male sexuality and spirituality. He goes far to dispel the contradictions between these concepts. *The Intimate Connection* points the way to a conception of sexuality in which the body serves as a foundation for a holistic personhood and a more integrated, mutual spirituality.

In the early part of the book, Nelson acknowledges the destructive and oppressive nature of much of men's activity in the world. It seems to be Nelson's hope that when confronted by their own deprivation of intimacy, love, and mutuality, many men will seek to reconstruct their lives via a critical analysis of their actions, their relations, and their foundational belief systems. Only after a thorough reappraisal of these aspects can men appropriate a more mutually relational selfhood by means of a different mythology and an alternative belief system, as well as new patterns of behavior.

The central question Nelson addresses is this: "Is there anything distinctive to the experience of one's own biological sex that grounds us in the development of a more whole personality, a personhood richer than its specific gender stereotype? More particularly, is there anything in the male body experience that enables him to transcend the traditional cultural images of masculinity?" (p. 99). One might respond to the question with the declaration that the only hope for men is to balance the characteristics of masculinity with traits of femininity, in effect to attain the ideal of androgyny. Another suggestion is that we should transcend gender-role traits altogether so no connection between personality characteristics and biological sex can be determined (a "polyandrogynous" option).

Nelson rejects all forms of androgyny. In their place he advocates a "deep" masculinity: by descending "deep" into male experience, we will find the images and experiential foundation for a conception of masculinity that is holistic and balanced. In the subterranean territory of consciousness where the somatic and psychic dimensions merge, we will discover the root metaphors and images to establish a masculine "energy which is not oppressive but rather

creative and life-giving" (p. 87). In their own bodies men would uncover the resources to reconstruct their lives in terms of mutually reciprocal, intimate, and empowering relationships.

The term *feminine*, then, would not be a component of male experience, but rather would be reserved for the holistic conception of women's experience. The categories of masculinity and femininity would therefore describe the fullness of the whole person arising from each sex's distinctive bodies. No longer would masculine and feminine be oppositionally contrasted. Instead, the categories would connote the fullness of personhood discovered within each sex.

If masculinity arises out of experiences of being a male, then the meanings of the male genitals are especially important. Nelson points out that traditionally attention has been focused predominantly on the phallus (the erect form of the male sex organ) to produce a one-sided overvaluation of those things associated with it: size, power, endurance, strength, linearity, and penetration. The emphasis on the phallus has been so overwhelming in our culture that the relaxed form of the male genitals has been disregarded or suppressed: the flaccid, soft penis. Nelson convincingly argues that the images of the phallus and the penis suggest a complementarity of characteristics which, if appropriated, would ground male wholeness.

This is, I believe, the most significant contribution of *The Intimate Connection*: male sexuality can be the ground of a full and whole masculinity derived in part from experiences of the strength and energy of the phallus and the vulnerability, receptivity, and softness of the penis. In the cyclical complementarity of the penis and phallus, men may find in their own bodies the foundational metaphors and images to construct patterns of a holistic relationality with nature, women, other men, and God.

To establish patterns of this type of mutuality with all creatures and with the Creator is to develop one's spirituality as well. Nelson asserts that theologically speaking, spirituality and sexuality are intimately related. In an incarnational theology, salvation and sanctification involves the whole person, including sexuality. Sal-

vation does not sanction or repress sexuality, but frees it for its divine intention. Sexual sanctification means a "growth in bodily self-acceptance, in the capacity for sensuousness, in the capacity for play, in the diffusion of the erotic throughout the body rather than in its genitalization, and in the recovery of lost dimensions of our sexuality" (p. 121). In short, Nelson calls for a reconstruction of traditionally formulated theology to take account of and celebrate the particularities of male and female sexual experience.

However much I sympathize with Nelson's incarnationalist perspective, it suffers from a lack of a serious and thorough social theory. Although Nelson acknowledges the cultural influences on sexuality, his theology is individualistic, and therefore incapable of adequately explaining the redemptive process within the social milieu vis-à-vis Christian soteriology.

Another serious weakness of Nelson's text is shared with the majority of theological writings which are directed to the laity: its educational deficiency. Nelson does not avail himself of the educative opportunity to teach his readers the *process* by which he arrives at his conclusions. Instead, he tells the reader *what* to think rather than *how* to think. As a result, the majority of his readers will only be able to agree or disagree with his propositions. The process of thought and experience by which he reconstructed his theology, his hermeneutic, will go unrecognized. The question of hermeneutics Nelson completely overlooks. Ironically, his theory of a new sexual relationality suffers from an underdeveloped notion of a hermeneutic of sexuality vis-à-vis male experience, culturally generated meaning, and the Christian tradition.

Lately, we have witnessed the consequences of a failure to take the question of hermeneutics seriously in the debacle that occurred in the recent General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, USA. Interestingly enough, my reading of this book paralleled the General Assembly (G.A.) meetings on the question of sexuality and spirituality. My own denomination, the United Methodist Church, as well as others will also take up the question in less than a year. The debate in the G.A. centered primarily on the relationship of theology and Christian practice to Christian sources, the principal

source for many being the Bible. The question of sexuality seemed secondary to the more fundamental question of biblical hermeneutics.

However, because the dimension of education was completely overshadowed by the political furor, no educational program was implemented throughout the denomination to discuss the hermeneutics of sexual theology.

For one reason or another, the debates on theological hermeneutics raging in divinity schools and seminaries have excluded the congregations. Consequently, a political, ethical, and theological gulf separates a great many clergy from their parishioners, and a great many parishioners from the rapidly changing social and cultural milieu. For the sake of the continued life of the church and of an increasing relevance of the church to society, the question of hermeneutics, theological and sexual, must not remain within the cloistered halls of academia, but should be a subject of thorough discussion in every congregation.

—ROBERT K. MARTIN

Religion, Society and Utopia in Nineteenth Century America. By Ira L. Mandelker. University of Massachusetts Press, 1984. 181 pages.

The title promises more than this modest book delivers. It actually is a study of a single commune in the nineteenth century, namely the Oneida community of John Humphrey Noyes. Although the narrow focus does not detract from the usefulness of this volume, the reader should not expect a comparative study of religious utopias. Mandelker instead presents a case-study of a movement which embodies many of the tensions and possibilities in this period. As with any case-study approach, the reader will have to consider carefully how far these findings can be generalized.

What Mandelker attempts is a balanced approach which pays due regard to the "community's theology, utopian vision, and prophecy" in the creation of the community and its eventual demise. Following Max Weber's lead, he analyzes Oneida from the viewpoint of "the dynamics and interaction of sacred and secular

value spheres" (p. 4), focusing on four tensions: between religion and economy; religion and democracy; religion and sex, women and the family; and religion and science. These four tensions are set within the historical and cultural context of antebellum America.

Oneida was established by the preacher-socialist John Humphrey Noyes who was converted in the "burned-over district" of New York during the revivals of Charles Finney. Profoundly affected, Noyes soon discovered that he had no place in the institutional church since his ideas were considered heretical or dangerous. According to Mandelker, three related notions were the centerpiece of Noyes' theology and the ideology of Oneida. One was an unusual realized post-millenialism. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Noyes did not look for the second coming of Christ, nor did he preach a realized eschatology in the usual sense. Rather, he preached that Christ had already returned in A.D. 70. Since that time people have had the opportunity to become perfect and to live in the Kingdom of God in this world. This leads to the second key doctrine, perfectionism. Noyes thought that if believers would separate and live according to the principles of religious communalism, they could and would become perfect in this life. One part of this perfection would be to live as the angels, "neither giving nor receiving in marriage." This last tenet, "complex marriage," held that sex was to be a holy sacrament to be enjoyed communally. This doctrine caused the most trouble for Oneida, since it violated state adultery laws.

Mandelker's account of the gradual dissolution of Oneida is carefully researched and clearly presented. He shows how the very tensions which gave birth to the community conspired to defeat the eschatological dream. Economic and generational difficulties affected Oneida as they did similar communes, but there were two unique stresses in Oneida. One was the structure of "complex marriage" itself. Intended as a communalizing of sex, it actually introduced a new hierarchy based on spiritual maturity. As the community disbanded, most of the members quickly opted for traditional monogamous relations and married.

Science was another factor which helped create and destroy the Oneida community. Mandelker shows how the founding families believed in the unity of science and religion which they interpreted as a movement toward human and social perfection. In order to insure the steady progress of Oneida toward perfection, members sent their children to Harvard and Yale. However, the emerging science and philosophy they learned there was not the same species which their parents had learned. The movement toward skepticism undermined the religious foundations of the community and made it difficult for persons to commit to the demanding communal structure.

Mandelker's work is helpful, but not consistently so. Oneida does serve as a good illustration of the cultural tensions in antebellum America, and Mandelker shows how Oneida was uniquely a product of that period. However, his portrayal of the wider society is not always clear or accurate. The discussion of the "internal anomaly of the calling" (p. 28) is superficial, yet is crucial to his argument. Likewise, his discussion of Jonathan Edwards (p. 43f) leaves the reader wondering whether he views Edwards as a prophet of the new era of revivalism and laissez-faire individualism, or as a reactionary out of touch with the times, or both. The difficulties stem from the thematic structure of the work. Mandelker covers too much ground in too little space with insufficient evidence. This lack of expertise reduces the book's value for the specialist.

—CRAIG D. ATWOOD

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